



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Monitoring Visit

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pool Road Studley Warwickshire B80 7QU

Inspection date	26 th April 2016
Reporting Inspector	Mr T J Hughes

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 – 11 years
Number on roll	226
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mrs Sarah Coyne
Telephone number	01527 852140
E-mail address	admin3507@welearn365.com
Date of previous inspection	June 2011
DFE School Number	937/3507
Unique Reference Number	125710

Headteacher	Mr Owen Finnegan
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Previous inspection:	1
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This inspection:	1
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE





May 2016

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

Mr Owen Finnegan
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Pool Road
Studley
Warwickshire
B80 7QU

Dear Mr Finnegan

Section 48 Monitoring inspection: 26th April 2016

Thank you for the very warm welcome you, your governors, pupils and staff gave to me when I inspected your school on 26th April 2016 and for the information you provided both before and during the inspection. In particular I would like to express my gratitude to the parish priest and governors for being so generous with their time.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last section 48 inspection to be an outstanding school and because it is now five years since you last received a diocesan inspection. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning for Catholic life and religious education. In order to make this judgement I read school documents, including a summative self-evaluation, I interviewed senior leaders, a number of governors, the parish priest, a small group of more recently qualified teachers and a group of pupils. I attended a whole school Mass, observed 3 part lessons with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and looked at a sample of pupils' written work. I was accompanied by pupils on a learning walk around the school.

Catholic Life

The evidence gathered during this monitoring visit confirms that St. Mary's is an outstanding Catholic primary school. The sound and rigorous self evaluation undertaken by the school together with the high quality provision for the Catholic life, demonstrate that the school leaders are reflective and aspirational. There is a faith-filled commitment on the part of the governors and senior staff to create a school setting where the spirit of Christ lives. The school leaders have established processes which enable them to plan, deliver and check the quality of provision for each child and furthermore they are prepared to debate and challenge in order to augment the quality of their work and in turn the response that the pupils make to their faith.

The process of self evaluation has been designed and implemented to involve all who work to develop the spiritual life of the school. The teaching and support staff are clear about how to create a faith filled learning environment, how it can be realistically monitored and what will be the successful steps to improvement. Senior staff manage and support this process through training, purposeful planning and regular evaluation. The headteacher and his senior colleagues undertake lesson observations and pupils' work scrutiny to obtain a contemporary and accurate picture of how the Catholic life is woven into the day to day teaching and learning. This process is further strengthened by formal learning walks to audit RE elements, that is, the prayer life of the school and the pupils' involvement in vocational work.



The governors lead and participate in the regular monitoring of the school's work in all aspects of the provision for Catholic life, RE and collective worship. They are strategic in the way in which they utilise their range of skills and experience to support and challenge the school. For example the parish priest and link governor for RE monitor and question the development of the liturgy, whilst other foundation governors will bring their experience of education and data analysis to scrutinise the standards attained by the pupils in RE. The governors collaborate with senior staff in the practical tasks of evaluating the provision and undertake lesson observations, book trawls and learning walk audits. These monitoring activities have informed the governors' understanding when the headteacher and other members of the RE team have presented reports and evidence to assist in the school improvement planning.

As a result of the governors' competence in reviewing the provision of the school, they have been increasingly focused on securing future success. This has led to a sturdy approach to recruitment. Advice from the diocese together with patience and care in writing the specification for new appointments, has led to the governors appointing teachers and support staff who share in the desire for faith and high standards and who also bring new ideas and provoke further improvements. The governors engage the views of the parents in order to enhance the self evaluation process. The outcomes of the parent questionnaires together with informal opportunities for discussion have provided a further level of feedback and have influenced actions accordingly.

The school leaders view the pupils as evangelists and are determined to both provide the richest spiritual environment to enhance their growth in faith and also to be influenced by their enthusiasm for the blossoming of the Catholic life in the school, parish and their homes. The senior leaders and governors take very seriously their responsibility to examine and understand the activities that the pupils are engaged in. For example the wide range of initiatives to support charities are reviewed and supported, recognising the benefits to the charities themselves, the local community, the school and the intellectual and vocational development of the pupils who drive the projects.

It is clear that the deep faith held by the school staff influences the high quality of the collective worship. The headteacher and his team have created an atmosphere in the school that places prayer at the heart of the community. The skills and vocation of the staff echo in the voices of the pupils as they worship. But the school staff have also liberated and empowered the pupils to design, compose and present worship, which belongs to them and expresses their relationship with God and one another.

Review of collective worship is both strategic and spontaneous. All of the stakeholders have many opportunities to participate, by attending the weekly Masses in school, sharing in weekend celebrations in the church, engaging in the sacramental programmes and services, taking the prayer prompts from the school's newsletters or attending the retreats. The high profile that the school attaches to collective worship has also precipitated an upgrading of the spiritual environment. The school has invested time and money in to creating spaces and focal points for prayer - the prayer garden, the liturgical displays and sacred artwork. Throughout the liturgical year the content and approach to collective worship is evaluated and areas to further enhance are built in to the development plan for RE.

Religious Education

The tracking of pupil achievement through well planned assessments in RE, the outcomes of the school's consistent procedures for monitoring teaching, book trawls and moderation of work all confirm the school's own appraisal that pupil progress and attainment in RE are outstanding. When pupils enter St Mary's in reception the majority are working broadly in line with national expectations for attainment across the core areas of learning in the early years. Regarding RE a significant minority begin their school life in line with diocesan expectations. By the time pupils leave at the end of key



stage 2 the overwhelming majority are operating at the expected level or above when assessed against diocesan levels of attainment.

Each term the senior leadership team monitors every pupil and each cohort to take account of their progress and required next steps. The data that evolves is discussed with individual teachers during pupil progress meetings. Some examples of the improvement issues that have been identified from this process are: the need for more differentiated planning to address a wider range of abilities, consideration being given to prompt higher level thinking skills, the implementation of a new marking policy, which allows more time to reflect upon, celebrate and address any highlighted concerns. The senior staff; the headteacher, the deputy head and the assistant head lead RE. Each member of this RE team brings a different ingredient to the complete picture of RE provision, which includes a reverent prayer life, very good knowledge of scripture, a comprehensive well planned and resourced curriculum and inspired art and music, which enlivens worship and reflection.

The school judges that the majority of teaching of RE is outstanding. The evidence gathered during this monitoring visit supports this view. The pupils benefit from the input of a team of skilled and experienced teachers who are excellent role models and make manifest their faith and subject knowledge during lessons. The teachers utilise good devices to engage and inspire their pupils and lead them to more in depth thinking. The best teaching is marked out by inspiring engagement with pupils, clear instructions and questioning which ignites the pupils' imagination and curiosity. Some teachers are particularly skilful in modelling a task to promote the pupils' own thinking and emotions about a spiritual topic. This finely tuned modelling could be shared amongst all of the staff to raise standards of teaching even higher.

After reviewing the teaching and learning provision in RE the senior leaders have enabled teachers to undertake paired sharing of teaching ideas and approaches; this has influenced all members of staff and the standard and variety of teaching has improved and broadened, as a result the pupils benefit from new routes in to learning about the life of Jesus, scripture and the liturgical seasons. Following the regular scrutiny of pupils' RE work the senior leaders have developed a new marking policy, which provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and engage in a dialogue with their teacher. This is allowing pupils to explore the impact of their learning in RE on their understanding of their faith and how it affects their lives.

Pupils respond very well in lessons, they feel confident in expressing their thoughts and ideas about matters of faith and they are secure in asking questions, as they know that their teachers will support their thinking and accept their spiritual notions. As a result their knowledge of the gospels and liturgy are very good and their ability to express themselves in prayer is remarkable. Pupils' work in RE books is of an equally high standard to that achieved in other core subjects and the clear progress that has been tracked by the senior staff as part of their work scrutiny, is evident. It is also clear that the process of work scrutiny and development is effective, as class teachers have tackled areas identified by senior staff, for example teachers are now working on greater levels of differentiation and addressing the frequency of unfinished work. In some year groups the pupils have regular opportunities to express their faith and religious understanding through more extended pieces of writing; other year groups would benefit from the same approach as they become ever more thoughtful in their appreciation of their faith.

As part of their self evaluation the school leaders have acknowledged the need to promote vocation in the hearts of the pupils. This has led to an impressive catalogue of local community and global initiatives that have motivated the pupils to design, compose, become active and influential in supporting causes and charities. One significant example is the pupils' determined work with 'Fairtrade'. Under the direct leadership of the pupils the school has both promoted 'Fairtrade' events at school and has brought about change in the practices of major local traders within their town.



When evaluating St. Mary's school, the governors demonstrate insight and determination and have become more adept at both recognising strengths and identifying areas to improve. They are also confident in challenging the staff and pupils to incrementally build on the quality of provision of the Catholic life, collective worship and religious education. The governors recognise that the greatest strength of the school is the deeply held faith of all who work in the school and parish and that this, together with the comprehensive systems for review and development, enables the school to make its mission '*Love to learn and learn to love*' a reality for the pupils who attend St. Mary's Catholic primary school.

Yours sincerely

Mr T J Hughes
Diocesan Inspector