

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Canterbury Road Kilburn NW6 5ST

Date of inspection: 19 May 2016



A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 2

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education (RE) in developing pupils' religious literacy is judged to be good. It is not yet outstanding because the school now needs to embed the good practice developed and allow new staff time to improve the Catholic education of the school even further. It must be said that the improvement in classroom religious education has been quite remarkable in a relatively short space of time. This is due to leadership at all levels from the executive head to the associate heads and all the school leadership team. They are being very well supported by a strong and effective governing body who provide excellent strategic vision for the school. All pupils in the school of different faiths and none declared receive an equally good experience of classroom RE. Attainment from a low base on entry is judged to be good overall and progress is equally judged to be good. Of particular note is the religious literacy and vocabulary acquired by the pupils, this is of a high standard. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and all teaching seen was at least good. Pupils get a good start in the early years and make rapid progress in their learning. In lessons pupils are challenged to give of their best and are frequently asked challenging and searching questions. Work needs to be modified to cater for pupils of all abilities and this is an area that the school needs to address as at present differentiation is by the outcomes of the pupils. New staff are being very well supported, they are all Catholic and having a real impact on this school. Pupils all now say they love learning about RE.

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 1

The school's overall effectiveness in this area is judged to be outstanding. Again the school has been transformed by the leadership team operating at all levels. The very fabric of the building has been completely renovated and one immediately knows this is a Catholic school from the moment of entry. There has been generous investment in resources and money has been well spent. Every area inspected was quite clearly outstanding and the 'pupil voice' was exceptional. Pupils are highly articulate, always well behaved and show a real love for developing a Catholic way of living. Prayer, worship and liturgy all have high prominence in the school now and partnerships at all levels are highly developed. Parents recognise and are very appreciative of all the changes brought by the new leadership team. The school wants to involve parents even more in the liturgical life of the school. Once again this deserved outstanding judgement is simply down to leadership especially that shown by the executive head in a short period of time. A quite remarkable achievement.

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 1 day in school, visited 12 lessons and 1 assembly, and carried out 5 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, 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 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

Mr Sean Flood	Lead Inspector
Mr Daniel Keane	Associate Inspector
Mrs Geraldine Pears	Associate Inspector

Description of School

The school is a two form entry Catholic Voluntary Aided primary school in the Local Authority of Brent and the locality of Kilburn Park. The school is situated in one of the most deprived areas of Brent. The school serves the parishes of Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart, Quex Road in Kilburn. The school is currently in a soft federation with St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Harlesden. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 58%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 31% and from other Faiths is 11%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 90%.

There are 323 pupils on roll, with 5 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a well above rate of families claiming free school meals. 149 pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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Executive Headteacher:	Mrs Dawn Titus
Associate Head of School	Mrs Geraldine Quinlan
Chair of Governors:	Mr Aloysius Frederick

Date of previous inspection:	26 February 2015
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Key for inspection grades:	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</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 has been quite remarkable improvement since the last inspection in February 2015. In fact every aspect of Catholic education has seen quite dramatic improvement in a short period of time. Some of the key improvements have been that Catholic education is now given its rightful place and status within the school. 10% of curriculum time is now devoted to RE. A wide range of resources such as Bibles have been purchased. A new and comprehensive curriculum has been introduced together with extensive staff training to implement this. Finally a new RE leadership has been put in place all of whom are committed to developing high quality RE. These are some of the main areas of improvement but there are so many others that one could list.

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

Grade 2

The content of St Mary's Catholic School religious education curriculum is good. The RE curriculum is carefully structured and meets all the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). Assessment and planning are linked to the Agreed Understandings in the levels of attainment. Resources are carefully linked to the areas of study within the RECD and are also linked to the teaching about other faiths. The senior management team and subject leader provide good support for all staff, including Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in using the RECD.

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

Grade 2

Pupil achievement is good in all classes seen. Planning is thorough and the pupils produce a considerable amount of work during the year. This work is kept and stored in folders. Pupils are confident and articulate in talking about what they have learnt. Attainment is judged to be good overall. It is not yet outstanding because the work given to the pupils does not offer sufficient or appropriate challenge at times to pupils of all abilities. The work needs to show evidence of greater differentiation in classrooms. Attainment on entry is below the national average and when pupils leave in Year 6 they have acquired a very sound grasp of religious education as shown through their written work. This is even more evident in their religious vocabulary and oral work. Progress overall is judged to be good. There were no gaps in attainment and progress and all groups including non-Catholic pupils show similar patterns of outcomes. Assessment is thorough and is becoming more rigorous as the curriculum becomes embedded within the school.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

The quality of teaching across the school is judged to be good. The new staff have benefitted from some high quality training and the partnership and expertise shown by the staff from St Joseph's school. This training has clearly had a considerable impact in a short period of time as all teaching is good. All staff new to the school were interviewed at length and were united in expressing their gratitude for the training and induction they had received. Teachers display good subject knowledge in all classes. Lessons observed were characterised by high expectations from teachers, a high level of challenge in questioning and pupils who are almost always engaged and enthusiastic in their

learning. Pupil's response and religious literacy is equally impressive and rapid progress in learning and understanding was seen in some lessons. Opportunities are limited for the older pupils to write at greater length and this is an area for development. Pupils get a very good start in the early years of the school and quickly learn about important figures in the Catholic Church such as Mary and Jesus and some of the saints. All lessons seen were at least good with some lessons demonstrating outstanding aspects of teaching right across the school. ICT is being well used in the school to enhance learning and resources are plentiful in all classrooms. The leadership team effectively monitor the quality of teaching and challenge any under performance in a rigorous manner. Assessment is developing well in the school and this does inform future planning. Work is being marked according to the school policy and all staff adhere to this policy. Pupils were seen working well in both an independent and a collaborative manner. Good behaviour and mutual respect between teachers and pupils characterised every lesson. Support staff also play a key role in supporting pupils with additional needs.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

The leadership and management of religious education are judged to be outstanding. It is rare to see a school where leadership and management are judged as outstanding but others areas are judged good. It is quite clearly outstanding because of the rapid and remarkable transformation of this school from failing to good in such a short period of time. The main reason for this improvement is the drive, determination and vision of the executive head and her strong leadership team. This includes associate heads of school and her entire leadership team across the federation who have been so effective in bringing about change. The new governing body are equally effective and have set a very strong and appropriate strategic direction for the school, once again in a short time frame. The governors have a great deal of experience and expertise to both support and challenge the school. Parents can be assured that the leadership and management of this school has been thoroughly inspected in every aspect and deservedly awarded an outstanding grade.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Provide more differentiated work during lessons to cater for pupils of all abilities
- Give greater opportunities for the older pupils to produce pieces of extended writing

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?

There has been an equally remarkable transformation in the Catholic life of the school. When one enters the school it is immediately obvious that this is a place that takes its Catholic life and identity seriously. Some of the key areas developed have been in the fabric of the building and its displays which are modern and reverent. Liturgy and worship are now central to the life of the school for all pupils. Pupils are given a chance to be of service and help the community through “Minnie Vinnies” and the understanding of the Common Good. The theology that underpins this call to service is of a very high order. There have been improvements in almost every single aspect of the Catholic life of this school

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade I

10% of curriculum time is now being devoted to RE as directed by the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales. A substantial budget has been allocated to RE and the images around the school emphasise the devotion to Our Lady which is central to the life and work of this school. Displays in all classes and indeed all around the school are of a high quality and are well maintained. The school has been very successful in its recruitment of new teachers all of whom are Catholic and all of whom are thriving in this environment.

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

Grade I

Prayer and worship is central to the daily life of this school. The two local parish priests are frequent and welcome visitors to the school and they too affirm the massive transformation that has taken place in this school in the recent past. Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school, through class prayer, assemblies and staff prayer. Opportunities for prayer and worship are offered from the richness of the Catholic tradition. Whole school worship and phase group assemblies are enhanced by the participation of pupils leading collective worship. Parents of pupils are invited to assemblies and other liturgies and greatly welcome this opportunity to participate. Regular whole-school masses and liturgies allow pupils across the key stages to play a full and active part in the prayer life of the school. Pupils are invited to participate in the prayer life of the school at various levels: through preparation of the liturgy, reading, altar serving, the presentation of offertory gifts, the choir and music, choosing hymns and prayers. Staff and leaders at all levels model the importance of prayer and Catholic worship in their lives through their own involvement in liturgy and communal prayer – whether it is through their own attendance at the parish Sunday mass, attending services for Education Sunday, praying for other schools’ needs and attending special masses. Staff always pray prior to staff meetings before school. Governors’ meetings always begin and end with an act of worship. From all this evidence it is clear this area is outstanding.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good, service and social justice

Grade I

The most impressive moment during this inspection was when three diocesan inspectors spoke with a group of some 12 pupils about their own experience of Catholic education and the Catholic life of the school. The pupils during this meeting were exceptional. They spoke in an articulate and mature manner, their religious literacy was of a high order and they had nothing but praise for the changes that had been made in their school. They were not rehearsed but were eager to share their thanks and appreciation towards the new leadership team and staff of this school. They said among other things: "We just love RE now. It is now as important as all other subjects". They said that teachers listened carefully to their views and ideas and were very respectful. Another pupil spoke highly of how: "Teachers make learning about RE more interesting now". Another interview took place with the Minnie Vinnies where pupils told inspectors how they were able to 'Make the lives of other people better'. When questioned further both groups were able to explain the theology that underpinned all the good work they do and how they were following the example of Jesus. Their responses were of the highest order and the school should feel justifiably proud of these pupils. The school does now emphasise the Gospel values and also their links with British values in a sensitive way. The school has also undertaken extensive work around the "Year of Mercy" and this is evident all around the school. The work around Catholic social justice and forgiveness is bearing rich fruit in this school. The school's work overall in this area is judged to be outstanding.

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

This school, through its soft federation, is showing partnership in a real and material way. The partnership, at the request of the diocese, has been extremely successful in promoting and developing Catholic education in Brent. Relationships are thriving with the two parishes served and this has been affirmed by the two parish priests. Surveys and questionnaires now show almost overwhelming support for the leadership of this school from parents and carers and parent links are continually being developed. Through the school mission statement pupils are encouraged to be witnesses to faith and follow in the footsteps of Christ. Partnership at all levels mentioned above is judged to be outstanding.

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

Grade I

The leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school are judged to be outstanding and this word does not do adequate justice to the work they have done in this school. The executive headteacher together with the associate heads of school and other members of her leadership team have quickly built a strong and vibrant Catholic school community. There is a shared purpose and common vision between the school leadership and the governors of the school. The school Mission Statement underpins all aspects of the school curriculum. Staff training, support and induction are all highly developed. This school richly deserves the judgement of outstanding for the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

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

- Develop an inside area for quiet contemplation, prayer and reflection
- Try to involve parents even more in the religious and liturgical life of the school