



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST ALBAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Broad Lane, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 5AL

Inspection date	10-11 October 2016
Reporting Inspector	Denis Cody
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	209
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Alan Grant
Telephone number	0121 4446530
E-mail address	enquiry@stalbanrc.bham.sch.uk

Date of previous inspection	October 2011
DFE School Number	330/3381
Unique Reference Number	103466

Headteacher	Rebecca McKinney
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Previous inspection:	2
This inspection:	1



Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspector observed teaching across three RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lessons were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and subject leader and the assistant parish priest, who is also link governor for RE.
- The inspector attended a whole school Mass and celebration assembly, 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.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' achievement and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

Information about the school

- St Alban's is a smaller than average size Catholic primary school and together with St Dunstan's Primary it serves the parishes of St Dunstan and St Jude in King's Heath, Birmingham.
- The great majority of pupils are White British, and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 95%.
- The degree of disadvantage among pupils is below national average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of SEN or an EHC plan is above national average, while the proportion of other pupils receiving support for special education needs is below average.
- Attainment on entry is below national levels of expectation.
- There has been significant recent change in school leadership. A new headteacher has been in post since the beginning of this term and a new chair and vice chair of governors were appointed only this week. The deputy head was appointed twelve months ago and the RE leader has been in post since the beginning of 2015. A new assistant priest and RE link governor was also appointed at the beginning of this term.

Main Findings

- All members of the school community value, respect and contribute to St Alban's outstanding Catholic life which is a constant focus of school planning, and a reference point in determining attitudes and behaviour.
- Collective worship is at the heart of school life and celebration, with pupils playing a full and enthusiastic part in its planning, delivery and evaluation.
- The quality of teaching in RE is consistently good and often outstanding, and is reflected in pupils' excellent attainment and progress, their spiritual and moral development and enjoyment of their learning.
- The newly-appointed headteacher and leadership team has made a strong and confident start in building on and developing the school's comprehensive programme of review and evaluation to ensure that strengths and areas for development are accurately identified and addressed, and that excellent and effective leadership is maintained and carried forward.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- St Alban's outstanding Catholic life is evident in every aspect of school activity; in the commitment of leaders, staff and pupils to its Catholic ethos, the respect and importance shown to prayer and worship throughout the school, the behaviour and supportive attitudes of pupils and in their spiritual and moral development.
- As *'faith friends'* and prayer leaders, through membership of prayer teams, the school council and chaplaincy teams, pupils develop a sense of service and play an active part in promoting and directing all aspects of Catholic life.
- Under the leadership of the school council, pupils contribute to the evaluation of Catholic life by monitoring prayer areas and the *'floorbooks'* in which classes record evidence of their Catholic life. They complete questionnaires and conduct interviews with younger children.
- Pupils value and respect the Catholic nature of the school and they understand how their faith and beliefs impact on their lives.
- Through the roles of responsibility made available to them pupils develop skills of leadership and co-operation. In guiding and supporting younger children and organising and leading the school's charitable awareness and fundraising activities, pupils are contributing to their own moral and vocational development.
- The school motto, *'Following in the footsteps of Jesus,'* is prominently displayed throughout the school and referred to in lessons and prayers. Pupils are familiar with its meaning and relevance to their lives, and both they and staff use it as a yardstick by which to determine and evaluate behaviour and attitudes.
- They have opportunities to give witness to their faith. As part of its Holy Week reflection, the whole school took part in a *'Witness Walk'* through the streets to St

Jude's Church, with members of the chaplaincy team carrying a wooden cross. There, one of the classes led the school in a service of the Stations of the Cross.

- The pupils interact with the wider Catholic community through close links with the parish and with neighbouring Catholic schools, for instance in sacramental preparation and celebration. Along with pupils from other Catholic schools, members of the chaplaincy team attend training and retreat days at Bishop Challoner secondary school.
- Provision of collective worship is very good. It is a fundamental part of the daily life of the school, consolidating and promoting pupils' learning and liturgical and faith development.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically and prayerfully in school Masses, prayer services and assemblies. They prepare prayer areas and altars before Mass and teams are trained as altar servers.
- The chaplaincy team is fully involved in planning and delivering whole school worship and also prayers for younger pupils. Prayer teams are active in leading classroom prayers, and through 'faith friends' older pupils mentor and support younger children in their prayer.
- Older pupils also help monitor and evaluate the impact of prayer through their role in carrying out prayer audits and pupil interviews. These show that they value collective worship.
- Pupils experience a variety of prayer styles and forms. They learn traditional prayers and are also confident in using spontaneous and personal prayer as well as silent prayer. In addition to prayer areas in each classroom, the school has an outdoor grotto and prayer garden, which provide a focus for both group and private prayer and reflection
- The strong commitment of pupils and staff towards Catholic faith and values is shown by their positive response to the opportunities provided for voluntary prayer. For example, during October groups of children meet at the grotto at lunchtime to say a decade of the rosary together. Teachers and teaching assistants also take part in a short weekly prayer service before school, led by the headteacher or parish priest.
- The school's excellent provision of spiritual, moral and vocational development is reflected in the pupils' understanding of their responsibility to help and support others and in their willingness to respond positively. For example, food donated for the harvest festival is passed to a local foodbank and at Christmas and Easter Year 6 pupils visit a nearby nursing home to meet residents and sing carols and hymns.
- Pupils have taken part in a vocations project in which parents, parish priests and outside speakers such as hospice and Cafod representatives have spoken about their vocations. Their understanding and experience of vocation has been further reinforced by a whole-school homework project on the subject and a special week when the entire year's vocation activities were reviewed and celebrated.
- The school places strong emphasis on restorative justice. Pupils are able to examine and discuss their behaviour and take responsibility for their actions and for putting things right when necessary.
- Catholic Christian values are promoted through the diocesan '*Catholic Schools Pupil Profile*' programme. These values are taught in school assemblies, displayed around the school and reinforced in class lessons. Pupils are able to discuss them and know how they can live them out in their own lives.

- The '*All that I am*' programme which is used with older children provides a firm understanding of sexual relationships within a Catholic moral context.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

- School leaders show outstanding commitment to, and understanding of, its Catholic nature. They ensure that Catholic life and collective worship are at the heart of all school life and improvement planning.
- The school has in place comprehensive systems for the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of Catholic life and collective worship. Therefore, leaders have been able to accurately identify strengths and areas for development and plan accordingly.
- Governors play a full part in review and self-evaluation of Catholic life and school worship, providing both support and challenge for school leaders. Individual governors regularly attend school Masses, assemblies and prayer services and provide informal feedback to the headteacher and governing body.
- The strong commitment of school leaders, including governors, to the Catholic life of the school is indicated by the inclusion of the RE subject leader in the senior leadership team and by the clear understanding that the headteacher has overall responsibility for Catholic life.
- The new headteacher and leadership team are firmly committed to working in partnership, building on and developing existing practice to promote the Catholic life and mission of the school and the spiritual, moral and vocational development of its pupils.
- At the beginning of this term the headteacher carried out a school review and produced an interim report which was discussed with governors and is now being put into practice. It included plans to extend pastoral support for pupils by training staff to deliver counselling and introduce meditation. There were also several initiatives, such as the use of 'Gospel Virtue Trees,' to highlight and promote behaviour by which pupils demonstrate they are 'Following in the footsteps of Jesus.'
- The school's mission statement and motto were also reviewed and renewed at the beginning of this term. Following a staff training day, pupils and governors were involved in examining their meaning and ways to promote their use in school. Pupils wrote their own mission statements which were shared with parents and governors, displayed in class and used to stimulate discussion and debate. The impact of this and the other initiatives introduced will be monitored during the year.
- The headteacher, RE leader and link governor have carried out learning walks to monitor and evaluate Catholic life. Audits of Catholic life have taken place involving all staff and governors. The school building has also been audited to see how it reflects and promotes Catholic life and to assess the impact of new initiatives.
- Performance management targets for senior leaders are linked to the RE Action Plan which includes targets for Catholic life and collective worship and is reviewed mid-year by all staff and the link governor.
- The RE Action Plan, however, concentrates largely on annual routine activities so that much of it changes very little from year to year. A document focusing on new

initiatives clearly linked to previous self-assessment would be a more effective tool for school improvement.

- A programme of observation, audit and review of prayer, worship and celebration is carried out by senior leaders, governors and pupils to monitor provision and impact. Evaluations and questionnaires from parents, staff and parishioners are analysed and reported to governors. School Masses are planned and reviewed at half-termly meetings between the headteacher and link governor.
- Since the last inspection leaders have ensured pupils receive ample opportunities to prepare and lead worship independently and confidently, to the extent that this has become a strength of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- Excellent and effective leadership of RE at all levels has ensured successful outcomes for pupils in terms of their knowledge, learning and attainment.
- Governors are well-informed and proactive in their oversight of RE. They receive and discuss reports and performance data from the headteacher, and the subject leader submits half-termly reports to the Standards and Curriculum committee. The link governor liaises with the subject leader and headteacher and takes part in monitoring activities such as learning walks and work scrutinies.
- Leaders work together to plan and implement school improvement. For example, following the review of RE provision carried out at the beginning of this term with the involvement of governors, RE will now be included with the other core subjects in half-termly pupil progress meetings.
- RE is well led and managed by the subject leader to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is constantly reviewed and promoted. Lesson planning and pupil assessments are monitored and new and inexperienced staff are supported.
- Close links are maintained with local Catholic schools and with the archdiocese through its cluster group meetings, facilitating collaborative activities and planning, and the dissemination of new ideas and initiatives.
- The school's judgement that pupil attainment, learning and progress in RE are outstanding is reliable because it is based on a comprehensive process of monitoring and evaluation effectively led and managed by the subject leader and headteacher.
- Performance data over time shows the attainment of pupils in all key stages is consistently above diocesan expectations. They make excellent progress as they move through the school. Year on year high levels of attainment are maintained and built upon.
- Pupil attainment data is collected and analysed to monitor the performance and progress of individuals and groups of children. As a result, pupil interventions can be targeted effectively and if necessary staff training or support can be arranged.
- Pupil attainment in RE is included in performance management targets of all staff.
- To ensure their judgements are accurate and consistent, teachers have worked with colleagues from other schools to moderate examples of pupils' work.
- Pupils enjoy RE lessons and are engaged and motivated. They are confident in discussing their work as well as their views and beliefs and those of others.

- Teaching in RE is consistently good and often outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and lessons are well-planned and delivered so that they meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- Lesson observations, work scrutinies and learning walks identify good practice and areas for development. Together with pupil questionnaires and interviews they provide information about the quality of teaching, learning and pupil engagement, and inform improvement planning.
- Staff audits of their own skills have resulted in improved planning and the provision of coaching and mentoring.
- Teachers promote effective learning through clearly understood lesson objectives and success criteria. Accurate feedback to pupils both during lessons and in written marking identifies, and makes pupils aware of, how they can move their learning forward.
- The RE curriculum effectively meets the needs of pupils and engages their interest. RE teaching, planning and assessment follow the diocesan RE scheme, '*Living and Growing as the People of God*,' and the amount of curriculum time allocated to RE meets the Bishops Conference requirements.
- The RE curriculum incorporates the learning skills included in the '*National Levels of Attainment in RE*' document.
- Following recommendations in the previous RE inspection, school leaders have instituted a renewed focus on Attainment Target 2 and staff have received training in promoting thinking skills and in the use of strategic questioning. As a result, pupils have been able to develop their critical and analytical learning skills and their ability to engage confidently in questions of meaning and purpose.
- Pupils learn about family life and sex education within a Catholic context and their learning about other faiths and cultures is enhanced by a Multi-Faith Week and visits to non-Christian places of worship. They learn respect and understanding for the beliefs of others through the school's promotion of British and Catholic Christian values.
- Residential visits and retreats are built into the curriculum and pupils' experience and learning in RE, is further extended by cross-curricular teaching and visits from outside speakers.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- In their action planning for Catholic life and RE school leaders should focus on new initiatives clearly linked to self-evaluation.