

# Archdiocese of Cardiff



## Inspection Report St. Francis Xavier's Catholic Primary School, Hereford.

Inspection dates	18 -19 May 2015
Reporting Inspector	Mr Lyndon Watkins
Accompanying Inspector	Mr Gareth Rein
Type of school	Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11yrs
Number on roll	209
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Chair of Governors	Mrs Marie Williams
School Address	Venn's Lane Hereford HR1 1DT
Tel. no.	01432 273941
E-mail address	<a href="mailto:admin@st-francisxaviers.hereford.sch.uk">admin@st-francisxaviers.hereford.sch.uk</a>
Parishes served	St. Francis Xavier's, Hereford Holy Trinity, Ledbury St. Ethelbert's, Leominster
Date of previous inspection	12 – 13 July 2010
Headteacher	Mrs Diana Pearce

## **Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

<b>Proportion</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>With very few exceptions</b>	<b>Nearly all</b>
<b>90% or more</b>	<b>Most</b>
<b>70% or more</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>60% or more</b>	<b>A majority</b>
<b>Close to 50%</b>	<b>Half/around half</b>
<b>Below 40%</b>	<b>A minority</b>
<b>Below 20%</b>	<b>Few</b>
<b>Less than 10%</b>	<b>Very few</b>

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Archdiocesan website: [www.rcadc.org](http://www.rcadc.org)

## **Context**

St. Francis Xavier's is a Catholic school of the Archdiocese of Cardiff, situated in the north of the city of Hereford. It has 209 pupils on roll, of whom 64% are baptised Catholics, 30% are of other Christian denominations, 3 are of other faiths and 3% have no religious affiliation.

Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) make up 23% of the school's population and 13% of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN).

The school has a wide catchment area and, in addition to Hereford itself, it receives pupils from rural Herefordshire as well as from the towns of Ledbury and Leominster.

In total, twelve teachers are employed; seven are full time and five part time. Of these, 92% are Catholic and two thirds hold either the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) or they have completed the CAREC course run by the Archdiocese. Some 37% of the school's support staff are Catholic.

The school had its last Section 48 inspection in July 2010. Since that time it has been working on developing the following areas in which recommendations for improvement were made:

- Ensuring that oral standards are matched in written work.
- Developing class-based acts of collective worship.
- Developing the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.
- Developing Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies in religious education.
- Developing the school's portfolio of work.

The school has identified the following areas for development in its Religious Education provision for 2014-15:

- The development of its First Holy Communion programme in cooperation with St Francis Xavier parish.
- The establishment of a Peace Garden.
- The raising of standards in provision of Religious Education.
- The introduction of the 'Journey in Love' sex and relationships education programme.

## **Summary**

<b>How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?</b>	<b>Good</b>
St. Francis Xavier's is a good Catholic school because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the quality of teaching throughout the school is consistently good.</li><li>• nearly all pupils make good progress.</li><li>• the quality of assessment is good.</li><li>• the quality of prayer and worship is good.</li><li>• the manner in which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is excellent.</li><li>• the quality of leadership is excellent.</li></ul>	
<b>What are the school's prospects for improvement?</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Prospects for improvement are excellent because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the manner in which leaders have worked to raise standards to this point in time demonstrates an impressive level of commitment, skill and passion. Their work, to date, has clearly made a very positive impact.</li><li>• Leaders possess the requisite skills to raise standards further, so that they can be excellent, in relation both to outcomes and provision in the short to medium term.</li><li>• Governors have high levels of commitment to the school. They clearly have the potential to achieve an appropriate balance between supporting leaders and holding them to account effectively.</li></ul>	

## **Recommendations and Required Actions**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

R1: Develop pedagogy in order to broaden teaching and learning strategies, focussing on:

- effective use of time in lessons
- the range of learning experiences for pupils.

R2: Ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to use IT effectively, in order to enhance their learning in Religious Education.

R3: Further develop the collation and analysis of data to ensure that academic targets are identified empirically.

### **What happens next?**

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Archdiocese.

## **Main Findings**

<b>KQ1. How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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Overall, outcomes are good.

Pupils become increasingly religiously literate as they move through the school at an appropriate rate. The quality of their verbal responses to teacher questions and their dialogue with one another is a particular strength. Their ability to articulate their thoughts on religious concepts is excellent. They are aware, for example, of the demands involved in a life of religious commitment. Evidence available indicates that pupils make good progress as they journey through the school. No significant variations between the progress made by groups of pupils is evident. Work in the field of improving pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills is good; for example, success criteria are used effectively to create a simple 'written dialogue' between teachers and pupils across the school. Work in terms of improving pupils' competence as learners, including the quality of their thinking skills, is under-developed in relation to key learning skills and dispositions. Pupils show interest in the themes being studied and most are engaged effectively. In some cases during lessons observed, engagement levels of some pupils declined due to overly long introductions during which they were passive.

The manner in which nearly all pupils enjoy their learning as reflected in their interest and engagement is excellent. Most pupils are able to remain on task over extended periods. In lessons observed during the inspection, they produced good standards of writing in short periods of time following extended teacher led input.

Pupil attainment at the end of both Key Stages is good. Evidence suggests that pupils make good, appropriate levels of progress as they proceed through the school. Broadly similar proportions of pupils attain expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 as they do at Key Stage 2; this was the case for example with the 2014 cohort. However, there is evidence to suggest that some high attaining pupils make additional 'value added' progress. The quality of pupils' work is consistently good across the school and it is excellent for a few pupils. Standards in Religious Education are comparable with those in English and it is clear from the work of the school that it enjoys full core subject status.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is excellent. Nearly all pupils demonstrate a very strong sense of belonging to the school community and their relationships with peers, including those from different backgrounds, are mature and impressive, reflecting the strong Catholic ethos of the school. They value being a part of a thriving Catholic community. Pupils' behaviour observed during the inspection was exemplary. They show respect for one another; a particular strength being the manner in which older pupils relate to and support younger ones. Pupils exhibit a keenness to take on responsibilities, for example, by being a part of the School Council and by supporting acts of collective worship through taking leading roles in relation to the use of IT.

Pupils greatly enjoy and benefit from the strong and excellent links established with the local parish and with the community at Belmont Abbey. Pupils comment on the positive role played in school life by the parish priest, who is a governor and a regular visitor to the school. School Council members who spoke to inspectors made this point with clarity. He plays a key role in the Catholic life of the community; the programme of class Masses, for example, being central. The quality of pastoral care at the school is excellent. All staff exhibit a genuine and admirable interest in the needs and well-being of pupils. As a consequence, pupils feel thoroughly loved and well supported. They report that they have any number of responsible adults to whom they can talk in times of need. Parents also confirm that the level of support provided by the school is of high quality and that it is much appreciated. The school develops an appropriate awareness amongst pupils in relation to their personal and social development and attitudes to safety. At the time of the inspection, leaders were in the process of introducing a new sex and relationships education programme in order to improve provision further.

The manner in which pupils respond to and participate in the school's prayer and worship life is good. They show impressive levels of reverence and respect during collective worship and they participate well in traditional prayer and liturgy. Provision in this area effectively contributes to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Provision would be further enhanced by a broadening of the variety of prayer styles; there is clearly a willingness to do this as the recent successful Sion Community Mission illustrates. The school has made progress in relation to worship being planned and led by pupils. During the inspection, very good examples of pupil led worship were observed. There is clearly much potential for this practice to develop further in the future.

<b>KQ2. How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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Overall, provision is good.

The quality of teaching is good. During the inspection, fourteen judgements were made about teaching (seven for provision and seven for outcomes). All were judged to be good. The quality of teaching throughout the school is therefore consistent and there is clearly great potential to raise standards further from this strong base. Teaching was judged to be good because:

- teacher-pupil relationships are very good.
- planning is good, with differentiation featuring well.
- teachers exhibit good questioning skills.
- teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- core concepts are well explained.
- teachers and other adults ensure that pupils remain on task.
- learning completed is usually shared at the conclusion of lessons.

All staff exhibit a determination to achieve excellence. However, teaching is not yet excellent because in the lessons observed:

- pupils often had to sit on the floor or at their desks for extended periods before non-teacher led learning activities began.
- the range of learning activities was limited.
- the pedagogy adopted did not give sufficient opportunity for pupils to develop their competency as learners or their skills of collaboration.
- most plenary activities did not 'teach-out' errors or further extend learning.

Teachers make good use of IT themselves as an aid to their teaching, however, during the lessons observed it was underused as a strategy to raise the quality of learning in relation to pupils engaging effectively and purposefully with technology. Resources for the provision of Religious Education are good and sufficient. Teaching Assistants exhibit a strong commitment to their roles and they have good relationships with pupils. The manner in which they contribute to positive pupil outcomes is good. However, they take a passive role during the lengthy lesson introductions referred to above.

Teachers plan appropriately with reference to the school's 'Come and See' scheme of work. Pupils' needs are taken into account and differentiation is good; this allows them to consolidate and to build well on prior learning.

The quality of assessment is good. Teachers track pupils' progress well within a system that assesses nine topics throughout the academic year. This is used to identify pupils making slower than expected progress, who then have access to support if needed. Work in this area would be enhanced if the plentiful data available were to be more effectively collated and analysed. There is potential for this data to contribute towards future developmental plans for academic Religious Education. Assessment for Learning (AfL) practice is good. Pupils use success criteria to identify how well they are doing. Overall, the quality of marking is good; it is positive and encouraging in nature. It often demands a learner response. This practice is good, however, it does not consistently point the way forward for pupils. Provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is good and consequently, ALN pupils make good progress.

The extent to which Religious Education and the wider life of the school meet pupils' needs is excellent. The 'Come and See' scheme satisfies the external requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. The manner in which provision promotes community cohesion (see KQ3) is very impressive; this is driven by the strong commitment of all staff. The school promotes equality and recognises diversity in a manner that is excellent. The demeanour, practice and approach of staff makes it abundantly clear to pupils that every individual is an equal and precious creation of God. Therefore, pastoral care is a strength of the school. Nearly all pupils appear to be secure and happy at the school. The links referred to above (in KQ1) with the parish and the abbey provide impressive opportunities for pupils to be an intrinsic part of parish life.

The quality of prayer and worship provided is good. The legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is met. Worship fully reflects the Catholic nature of the school. Good acts of worship were observed during the inspection led both by adults and pupils. Parents are welcomed to join acts of worship regularly, including termly class Masses; this provision is much appreciated. Each classroom has a focal point aimed at encouraging reflectiveness and prayer; their quality is good.

<b>KQ3. How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
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Overall, the quality of leadership and management is excellent.

The judgement for this key question is higher than those for the first two because it recognises the impressive work of senior leaders to date (over a relatively short period of time) and the manner in which they have been supported by staff and governors. The potential to raise the quality of outcomes and provision to 'excellent' in the short to medium term is clearly evident.

Governors display a strong commitment to their roles and a commendable sense of loyalty towards the school. They are an intrinsic part of the school community. They fulfil all of their statutory and canonical responsibilities. Governors are regularly involved in the process of reviewing the school's mission statement, which sets the tone for the Catholic ethos of the school and for all its work. They help to set the strategic direction of the school in that they approve development plans presented by leaders, of whom they are very supportive. The good work of governors would be further enhanced if they were to hold leaders to account more effectively by asking searching questions in relation to pupil progress and to its associated data. This would allow governors to acquire a greater depth of knowledge in this area. This would be a relatively simple step for governors to take, given their clear sense of commitment to their work and because the relevant data is available. Governors have had a consultative role in the development of the school's self-evaluation document, which has been produced by the Curriculum Leader. Governors fulfil their duties to promote community cohesion effectively and as a result of their work with senior leaders, the quality of the school's work in this area is excellent as outlined below.

The headteacher shows great commitment to her role; she is passionate about her work within the school community. This work to date has clearly had a significant impact on the school as a whole and on standards in particular; this places the school in a very positive position in relation to future developments. The head is ably supported by the curriculum leader for Religious Education, who also shows great commitment to her role, and by staff generally. The leadership group as a whole clearly have the potential to make further significant improvements to provision and outcomes in the future.



The quality of the school's processes in relation to the monitoring, evaluating and reviewing (MER) of the provision for the Catholic life of the school is excellent. Full use is made of diocesan training as well as of in-house expertise. Leaders are fully aware of the very positive impact of the school's work in this area. Particularly impressive is the work of leaders in relation to pupils' spiritual and moral development, which is excellent.

The headteacher, Religious Education leader and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Values co-ordinator, work well as a team to give Religious Education a high profile in the curriculum. The diligent leader for Religious Education fulfils her role effectively. She has introduced archdiocesan initiatives, which are becoming embedded and making a positive impact on raising standards. Leaders and managers conduct a range of self-evaluation activities relating to provision and outcomes for pupils in curriculum Religious Education. These provide the basis for the school's self-evaluation document and action plans. Transition links with the high school and a local Catholic primary school have enabled cross phase moderation meetings to take place. The school has plans to further develop this process.

The manner in which leaders promote partnerships and community cohesion is excellent. There is a very strong sense of belonging in the school and all are welcomed in a spirit of inclusivity, equality and respect. The school is a strong Catholic community where all stakeholder groups are valued and invited to contribute to its core purpose. Relationships between pupils are very positive and children from different backgrounds work and play together happily. Leaders and managers demonstrate a positive work ethic and a desire to make a difference. There is effective provision for pupils to develop an understanding of their role in society. Pupils are well informed about sustainability and global citizenship, especially through fundraising projects and planned opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of the wider global community, for example through Operation Christmas Child.

The school has forged excellent relationships and enjoys an outstanding reputation within the local community. It has contributed to several community projects, for example with St. Michael's Hospice and the Hereford River Carnival, and it maintains excellent links with local religious communities including the Poor Clare Monastery. The school recognises the primary role of parents and actively involves them in many aspects of school life. This is something that all parents involved in communicating with inspectors, as a part of the inspection process, were keen to emphasise and to express their appreciation for. Therefore, the manner in which leaders engage with parents is excellent.

## **Appendix 1**

Responses to parent questionnaires.

Responses were received from 49 parents. All comment was positive, commonly relating to the school's:

- welcoming approach.
- high quality of leadership.
- strong Catholic ethos.
- positive reputation locally and
- high standards.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Evidence Base**

- Pre-inspection team consultation.
- Self-Evaluation documents.
- School Improvement Plan.
- Lesson observations in seven classes.
- Observations of acts of collective worship.
- Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks.
- The school environment.
- Foci for prayer and reflection.
- Discussions with staff.
- Interviews with the Headteacher, the Curriculum Leader, the Link Governor and with other governors.
- Meeting with parents.
- Meeting with the School Council.
- Parental questionnaires.
- A range of portfolios provided.