

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 118768

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School
King Edward Avenue
Dartford
Kent
DA1 5HQ

Chair of Governors
Headteacher
Inspectors

Mrs Margaret McAleese
Miss Isabel Quinn
Mrs Angela O'Connor
Mrs Angela Ireland

Inspection dates

8th May 2012

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES
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Director of Education: Dr Anne Bamford**

Introduction

Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Gravesend Deanery of the Arch/Diocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Kent LA. The principal parish which the school serves is St Anselms, Dartford. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 75%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in all Key Stages.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 216. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Around 20% of the pupils receive extra support in class. Pupils come from a range of cultural heritages, which include White British, Nigeria, Brazil, India, Poland and Ireland. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

Our Lady's is a good school with many outstanding features. It is warm, welcoming and inclusive with an outstanding catholic ethos which permeates all areas of school life. The Mission statement, which all members of the community are aware of, drives the school. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and committed staff and governors are constantly striving to raise standards. The environment, which reflects the strong catholic ethos, is very attractive and well cared for with many beautiful displays. The care, guidance and support given to pupils is excellent and pupils are justifiably very proud of their school. The pupil's behaviour is excellent and they are polite and well mannered. Relationships with the parish and the clergy are mutually supportive and beneficial. Parents are very appreciative of the school and links with the parish and recognise the school's role in the spiritual development of each child. As one parent said "The school has been very effective and helpful in my child's spiritual and moral as well as religious development. Parish/school links are very much alive" Given their starting point pupils make good progress throughout the school. Standards could be raised further by providing activities which will challenge and extend the more able pupils. The issues from the last Inspection have been resolved and good progress has been made. The school has excellent capacity to further improve.

Grade 2

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Ensure that planning includes activities to challenge the more able pupils

Ensure that the process of interactive marking is consistent across the school

To further enhance the teaching of other Faiths, consideration should be given to developing a programme of visits to places of worship and visitors from other Faiths

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a very clear vision of catholic education. She is very enthusiastic, inspirational and totally committed to raising standards and developing the catholic life of the school. Despite the many staff changes she has created a strong and cohesive team who uphold the catholic values and ideals which have a positive impact on the pupils.

The governors, ably led by the chair, know the school well and have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop. They are closely involved in the life of the school through frequent visits and through working with the strategy and curriculum committees.

Relationships on all levels and with all groups are excellent. Care, guidance and support for the pupils is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe and well cared for and are very certain that if any problems arise they will be dealt with straight away. Pupils are confident, independent, well mannered and very friendly. Their behaviour is excellent, and any adverse behaviour is managed extremely well.

The home, school relationship is flourishing and parents are very supportive of the school. They are well informed of all aspects of school life, and are very appreciative of all they do. As one parent said "Our Lady's is a wonderful school and the children have a wonderful religious life at school. My children have learnt respect, humility, right and wrong."

Relationships with the parish community are very strong and members of the clergy play an active role in the life of the school.

The catholic ethos is celebrated in the many stunning and high quality displays and artefacts in evidence around the school. For example there are beautiful murals in the playground completed by the Art Club and a lovely mosaic of Our Lady which was created with the help of pupils and staff from St Johns secondary school. In every classroom were displays of Our Lady celebrating the month of May and in the Hall was a very prominent display depicting the Stations of the Cross. All of these and many other displays reflect the strong catholic ethos of the school.

Grade 1

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

Provision for prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and is outstanding. There is a rich programme of liturgies, assemblies and masses, which include Harvest celebrations, Stations of the Cross and Crowning of Our Lady. A great deal of work has been undertaken in understanding the changes in the mass liturgy, so that the pupils can participate more fully.

Prayer corners are very evident and well used in each classroom and around the school. On every prayer corner is a large statue of an open hand. The pupils write their own prayers and place them in the hand. Of particular note is the new prayer area in the outside gazebo, which was suggested by the pupils. This gives a wonderful opportunity for personal and voluntary prayer and is well used. For example at break time the headteacher and/or the religious education coordinator take a group of children for different activities such as read the bible, write prayers or say the rosary. Pupils have many opportunities to pray. There is a school prayer book to encourage children to learn the traditional prayers of the church. They are encouraged to write their own prayers and to engage in reflection and responsive prayer. Each morning the staff are invited to come and pray together before school begins. All classes take turns to lead Assemblies and parents are invited to attend. For example the school council led an Assembly on the Stations of the Cross. This was attended by the school, parish and parents. The pupils have been doing a great deal of work on the Saints with each class investigating the life and impact of a different saint.

The whole school Assembly, which was led by the headteacher was on the theme "Calling us to be Saints" and reflected Pope Benedict's call to Sainthood. The pupils entered the Hall singing "Come and join the Circle" and all then sat in a circle around a focal point. The atmosphere was calm and peaceful. The pupils sat quietly and listened but were confident in answering questions. They were prayerful and respectful and their behaviour was excellent. They sang joyfully and enthusiastically together.

Masses are held in the school and the parish church on a regular basis and pupils are given good opportunities to participate.

There is a very active liturgy group in the parish which liaises closely with the school. The parish are very appreciative of the support from the school. "The headteacher and the staff give their full support to us. It is invaluable in practising and choosing readers, and bringing together pupils from Our Lady's with other children in the parish."

Grade 1

Community Cohesion

Our Lady's is a very inclusive, warm and welcoming school, which celebrates the uniqueness of the individual and the wide cultural heritage of the community it serves. Community cohesion within the school is very strong. The school council is very proactive and have an influential voice in the school. For example the pupils run their own clubs at lunchtime. These are supervised by a member of staff but they are organised by the pupils. The school council also worked with Dartford council in designing posters to highlight the dangers of motorists speeding outside the school and encouraging them to slow down. Pupil's awareness of themselves as members of the local and national community and of the cultural identity of the

country we live in is developed in many ways such as Black History month and Cultural Diversity week among others.

Relationships with the local community are good and are mutually beneficial. There are good links with all the schools in the deanery. Strong links exist with the two local catholic secondary school, working together to support the pupils. A very effective transition programme and booklet enables the pupils to make a happy transfer to the secondary school. Many of the staff are actively involved in the parish community, supporting the First Communion programme and events such as the parish fairs and opening of the parish centre.

The school participates in the life of the Diocese. For example Year 3 took part in the nativity concert at Aylesford and the school takes part in the Good Shepherd celebration.

There is regular fund raising for a variety of Charities local, national and international. For example poppy selling during November, and holding raffles during Lent to raise funds for CAFOD. The pupils were also involved in fund raising ideas and activities for the parish centre and participated in the opening Mass and ceremony.

Global awareness is actively encouraged. The school is currently involved in etwinning projects with other schools throughout the country and in Europe. For example in the Comenius project the school is working with schools in Spain and Iceland. Staff have visited each other and the pupils took part in a joint project linking with each other through the internet.

Grade 1

Religious education

Achievement and standards

General attainment on entry to school is broadly average. Pupils settle well into the Foundation Stage and make good progress. They make good progress across the school and standards by the end of key stage 2 are above national expectations. Pupils have very good oral skills and reading skills which help them in their knowledge and understanding. There is no significant difference between groups of learners. The behaviour in all lessons observed was excellent. Pupils listen well to the teacher and to each other. In particular paired discussion from the very youngest age group was well advanced. Pupils enjoy their lessons, are enthusiastic and eager to answer.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the good adult support they receive.

Pupils are able to record their work in a variety of ways, and are able to work independently, in small groups and in pairs.

On the whole books are well presented, with evidence of some independent work. Pupils own self assessment is good and shows an awareness of how they can improve. There are good opportunities for social and moral teaching. For example the interactive whiteboard is used as a means for prayer and moments of quiet reflection enabling the pupils to relate what they have learnt to their own lives.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning was good with some outstanding features seen. When teaching was good or better lessons were well paced, there were a variety of activities, the learning intentions and success criteria were clear and shared with the pupils and pupils were given the opportunity to apply their own learning. In a Reception class there were several different activities on the theme of Pentecost. These included one group engaging in role play and dressing up, others were singing and making music and another group was making a concept map on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. All the groups were well supported by teaching assistants. Teacher's class management was excellent resulting in good behaviour and continued focus on tasks. Teacher's subject knowledge was good and they encourage pupils to use a range of cross curricular skills. For example in a Year 6 class the pupils were working together to create their own interpretation of Pentecost using imagery and symbolism.

Activities were interesting, and although some were challenging, this should be developed to ensure the more able pupils are consistently being challenged and making maximum progress. Planning is good and detailed and would further benefit from identification of ability groups matched to tasks. Assessment for learning is good and developing well. Formal assessment is undertaken according to Diocesan guidelines and the new tracking system is already impacting on the quality of the teaching and learning. All teachers mark work positively with individual comments. There is evidence of some good interactive marking in a few classes and this good practice needs to be applied consistently across the school.

Grade 2

The religious education curriculum

The religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops conference and 10% of the timetable in all key Stages is allocated to the teaching of religious education. The curriculum builds on prior attainment and shows a balance of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. The catholic faith, teaching and traditions are fully represented and the content is made relevant to pupil's lives. The curriculum provides good opportunities for spiritual and moral development. Personal, social, health and citizenship education and circle time support the religious education curriculum.

There are good cross curricular links such as Information and Communication Technology, Dance, Music, Art and Literacy. For example the Celebration Wall has a Display on celebrating writing through religious education, with comments posted by the headteacher, staff and other pupils. Technology is used very effectively in the corridors on displays of either bible stories or psalms. If a button is pressed there is a recording of a child's voice explaining why this is important.

Other faiths are taught in accordance with the Here I Am curriculum. There are good resources to support this area. To further enhance this part of the curriculum consideration should be given to a programme of visits to places of worship and visitors from other faiths.

Grade 2

Leadership and management

The recently appointed subject leader has been in post since last September. She has been very well supported in her new role by the headteacher and senior leadership. The subject leader is very enthusiastic about her new role. She is committed to raising standards and ensuring that religious education continues to have a high profile in school. The monitoring of all aspects of religious education is very comprehensive and gives a very clear picture of the schools strength and areas for development.

Regular staff meetings and moderation of pupils work are led by the subject leader to ensure agreement across the school. Portfolios of annotated pupils work have been compiled to ensure consistency and are a useful aid to new staff. The subject leader has attended the Diocesan conference and deanery meetings and has worked with other subject leaders to plan the deanery inset and mass. Resources to support the religious education curriculum are very good. The subject leader has undertaken an audit to ensure that resources are kept up to date, and she has reorganised the resources so that they are easily accessible to staff. The religious education governor is well aware of standards and areas for development through regular meetings with the headteacher and subject leader.

Grade 2