



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY AND ST JOHN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 4th -5th July 2013
Reporting Inspector Denis Cody

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	393
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Jan Gospel
School address	Beaufort Rd Erdington Birmingham B23 7NB
Telephone number	0121 3823522
E-mail address	enquiry@stmryjon.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2009
DFE School number	330 3350
Unique Reference Number	103442

Headteacher Miss Veronica Fenlon

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed three full RE lessons with the headteacher. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. He held meetings with the deputy chair of governors, headteacher and parish priest. He attended a school Mass 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. He looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about a successful aspect of the school's Catholic life, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Mary and St John is a large, two form entry Catholic primary school situated on a split site either side of a busy main road. The school is in the parish of St Mary and St John in Erdington, Birmingham, and serves an area of significant social deprivation. 38% of pupils are baptised Catholics and 82% are from ethnic minorities, mainly of Black or Black British heritage. The number of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities is above average, while the number eligible for free school meals is well above average. Attainment on entry is below the national average.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation St Mary and St John judges itself to be a good Catholic school which recognises the importance of relationships, an inclusive school where everyone is valued as a member of God's family. Pupils' spiritual and moral development, the effectiveness of the curriculum and pupil involvement in Catholic life and collective worship are all judged to be good. These judgements are accurate in relation to elements of its Catholic life, collective worship and curriculum provision. The school is aware that its teaching and learning, and the monitoring and evaluation of its Catholic life require improvement to be good, and that these are the areas upon which it should focus in its improvement planning.

School self-evaluation

School leaders understand the importance of accurate self-evaluation and the role it plays in school improvement. They are working towards establishing a comprehensive system of self-evaluation in relation to Catholic life and religious education and embedding it in school improvement planning.

To evaluate the quality of teaching, lesson observations, work trawls and learning walks are carried out, and the RE co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning on a half-termly basis. This leads to sharing of good practice and developmental feedback for individual teachers. The school's judgement that RE teaching is good reflects the quality of the best teaching and the fact that, overall, improvement is taking place, and to that extent is supported by lesson observations during the inspection. However the school's own evaluation is that only 50% of teaching is consistently good. Therefore it must be a priority for the school to continue to strive to bring all teaching up to the quality of the very best. To this end it has identified the need for more attention to be given to differentiation to better meet the needs of individual children.

The school's judgement that learning is satisfactory is based largely on evidence such as lesson observations which show pupils enjoy RE lessons, participate actively and make some progress during lessons. Comparisons with literacy show pupils' work to be of similar quality. As indicated in the last inspection, systematic analysis of the end of unit assessments would provide more accurate and detailed information about pupil learning and attainment. It would help highlight areas for development, and so promote improvement, in both teaching and learning. Similarly, adoption of the diocesan baseline assessments would provide clear evidence of pupil attainment on entry to school and progress made in the early years. In order to enhance the quality of pupils' learning in RE the school should extend its use of the *'Levels of Attainment in Religious Education'* to identify and develop the skills necessary for learning in RE, and ensure the curriculum provides opportunities for their delivery. In doing so it would also be carrying out a review of the effectiveness of its curriculum provision, management and monitoring of which would be made easier and more effective by adopting the diocesan long term planning sheet.

Evaluation of Catholic life and collective worship is led by the headteacher and governing body. In the RE action plan, updating the diocesan RE self evaluation document is used as a framework for evaluation of all aspects of Catholic life throughout the year. Successes and areas for development are identified, shared with the wider school community and acted upon where appropriate. For example all staff have an annual performance management target promoting the Catholic life of the school. The school improvement plan also contains targets relating to Catholic life, to which the governors contribute. Through the strategy committee they are involved in monitoring the Catholic life of the school and progress being made with improvement plan targets. The headteacher reports termly to the governing body on the Catholic life of the school and it is the first item on the agenda at each meeting. At present parents are invited to take part in the self-evaluation process by providing feedback on their experience of the school's Catholic life, and there are plans to provide more opportunities for pupils to do so.

The school has identified the need to develop its monitoring in relation to provision and quality of collective worship, to incorporate greater pupil involvement. To build on current practice and develop a formal system of self-evaluation for its Catholic life as a whole, the school could now produce a clear definition of what comprises its Catholic life and consider the processes by which each aspect could be monitored and evaluated. As part of an annual programme of self-review, time could be set aside for a focused reflection on the quality as well as the provision of Catholic life. It could involve input from parents, pupils and governors as well as staff. Documents are available on the Diocesan Education Service website which would prove useful in stimulating discussion about the definition and quality of Catholic life in school.

The headteacher has recently assumed the role of RE leader and has a good understanding of the school's strengths in this area and also the aspects which require improvement to be good. With the senior management team and governing body she shares a positive vision and commitment to the school's Catholic life and religious education. Therefore there is capacity for school improvement.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Despite most pupils entering school with very little religious knowledge, experience or prayer life their attainment in RE throughout all key stages is satisfactory, with achievement in line with expectations and comparable to that in other core subjects. Children of all

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

abilities enjoy learning in RE lessons and take part enthusiastically in question and answer sessions and a wide range of activities. Most make at least satisfactory progress in their learning over time, including those with additional learning needs.

Catholic life and collective worship are strengths of the school, contributing to its overall ethos and effectiveness. This is reflected in the willingness of pupils to work together, listening to the views and opinions of others and to take responsibility for their own actions. The school's Catholic ethos promotes a sense of vocation and service, encouraging the children 'to become the person God intended them to be,' to develop a sense of justice and to support those in need through prayer and fundraising for charitable causes.

Prayer is a regular and consistent part of daily routines for staff and pupils. Each class and entrance hall has its own prayer focus area which reflects the Church's year and season, and is used during times of prayer and worship. The children show reverence and respect during the weekly Masses in the parish church, and take an active part in readings, prayers and hymns. They also participate well in school assemblies and prayer services, responding to opportunities for answering questions, offering private and public prayer and for reflective silence. Planning for collective worship is structured to ensure inclusion of the elements of gathering, listening, responding and mission. Older children are able to plan, prepare and present their own collective worship.

All senior and middle leaders demonstrate consistently good teaching, and the proportion of good teaching throughout the school is increasing. Children are presented with a variety of tasks and activities and have the opportunity to work in pairs, small groups and independently. Teaching assistants are deployed to offer additional help to individual or groups of children where appropriate. In-service training is provided to improve the quality of teaching and to enhance teachers' subject knowledge. The best teaching provides tasks which are differentiated to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities; and uses learning objectives, success criteria and assessment for learning techniques to involve pupils in their own learning. The school is committed to make all teaching at least good.

The RE curriculum is based on the diocesan Curriculum Strategy '*Learning and Growing as the People of God*,' which ensures continuity and progression. Ten per cent of the timetable is allocated to RE. The curriculum is enhanced and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils through a programme of school visits and a variety of school-based activities. For example, visits are arranged to St Chad's Cathedral and Oscott College. A residential visit to Alton Castle provides additional opportunity for prayer and reflection. Children are involved in a range of activities to help them learn about other cultures and faiths, such as a Festival of Cultures, multi-faith weeks and Black History Week. This year has seen a whole-school focus on the Year of Faith, representations and interpretations of which are displayed throughout the school.

Recommendations

Update current procedures to produce a comprehensive programme for the formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE

Compile a clear definition of what comprises the school's Catholic life and develop processes by which it can be monitored and evaluated.

Carry out detailed analysis of end of unit assessments in RE to inform planning for improvement in teaching and learning



Diocesan Education Service,
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July 2013

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Mary and St John Catholic Primary School,
July 2013**

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

St Mary and St John is an inclusive school where everyone is valued as a member of God's family. It has a strong Catholic ethos in which children's spiritual, moral and vocational development can flourish and which encourages them to take responsibility for their actions and to treat others with care and respect. Collective worship is a strength of the school and prayer is a part of daily routine. Pupils show reverence and respect and older children are able to plan, prepare and present their own collective worship.

Children feel happy and secure and speak positively about the school. They enjoy taking part in religious education lessons, showing interest and enthusiasm and they make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding.

The headteacher, staff and governors are committed to the school and have a good understanding of its needs. They are aware that its teaching and learning, and the monitoring and evaluation of its Catholic life require improvement to be good, and they are already making progress as they focus on these areas in their improvement planning.

To help in this process I have recommended that the school should update its monitoring and evaluation arrangements for teaching and learning in RE; establish a formal process for monitoring and evaluating its Catholic life; and carry out a detailed analysis of pupil assessments in RE to help improve teaching and learning.

I very much enjoyed working with the staff and children and would like to thank everyone for their warm welcome. The children were friendly, helpful and very well-behaved, a credit to their school and families.

Yours sincerely

Denis Cody
Diocesan Inspector