



# Diocese of Westminster

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## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **St Agnes Catholic Primary School**

Thorverton Road, Cricklewood, London NW2 1RG

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DfE Number: 302/3502

Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Jordan

Chair of Governors: Mrs Helen Datta

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Date of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010  
Date of previous inspection 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Pamela Brannigan

## **Description of School**

St Agnes is a 1.5 form entry primary school with nursery in the London borough of Barnet. The school serves the parish of St Agnes in Cricklewood with some pupils coming from Brent and Camden. There are currently 289 full time pupils on roll with a further 51 in nursery on a part-time basis. Almost all pupils are baptised Catholics. Attainment on entry to the school is below the national average and as the school is in an area of deprivation the nursery offers extended hours to all pupils. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is around the national average and almost 50% of pupils have English as an additional language, some at an early stage of acquisition. There are 13 full time and 6 part time teachers in the school of whom 69% are Catholics. Six teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) qualification or equivalent. The school's mission statement informs the life of the school and a shortened version is known by pupils. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is available for pupils including breakfast and after school clubs. The school is part of an extended schools consortium which offers access to services and support for families.

### **Guide for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

St Agnes is an outstanding Catholic school where faith and practice are central to school life. Pupils make very good progress, teaching is excellent and assessment is in place. Religious education is at the heart of the curriculum and is well planned, monitored and evaluated. Prayer and worship underpin the Catholic life of the school. Pupil behaviour is excellent. Pupils and parents speak very highly of their school and value the commitment of staff and the outstanding standard of teaching and learning. Pastoral care is very good and is given high priority by all members of staff. Governors demonstrate a strong sense of commitment to the religious life of the school. There are excellent links with the local parish through the support given to the school by the parish priest who is on the governing body and is a frequent visitor to the school. Spiritual, moral and social development is very well addressed through religious education and other curriculum areas and permeates the wider life of the school. A range of charities including CAFOD Family Fast Day, are supported throughout the year. The headteacher demonstrates an excellent understanding of her role and is ably supported by the senior leadership team, staff and governors.

**Grade 1**

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

The area of development identified in the last inspection has been very well addressed. The school has implemented the planned development of religious education by using the national levels of attainment to record pupils' progress and this process is under constant review. There is systematic and rigorous monitoring of planning, teaching, learning and assessment. There is much evidence that the school constantly strives for improvement and places a strong emphasis on staff development.

**Grade 1**

### **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop**

The school has an excellent capacity for improvement and development. There is a stable staff and the school has been able to make good appointments in recent years with effective systems for support and induction. The subject leaders who share the role of religious education co-ordinator have identified areas for development and are able to devote the necessary time to embed systems and support colleagues. They are helped in this by the senior

management team and all staff. The whole school community demonstrates a strong commitment to the Catholic ethos and religious education. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection and there is evidence of shared good practice and support for new teachers. There are developments in the wider life of the school which focus on high standards across the curriculum. Religious education is reviewed regularly as part of the school's self-evaluation process. The governing body includes members who support the school and visit frequently. The religious education budget is generous and resources are good. Relevant training is available for all staff. The self-evaluation documentation is reviewed regularly and is up to date.

## **Grade 1**

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Put in place additional training for governors to enable them to develop their leadership role in the life of the school.
- Include sections on religious education and the Catholic life of the school in the annual parent questionnaire.

### **The Catholic Life of the School**

#### **Leadership and Management**

The school is very well managed. The headteacher and senior staff provide clear direction for the Catholic life of the school. They promote a strong sense of spiritual purpose with a focus on high standards and full personal development of pupils. The headteacher leads all areas of school worship in her role as religious education co-ordinator. All staff support her in this. There are good links between the governing body, headteacher and staff. The school's Catholic ethos is evident in the good level of pastoral care and the trust between pupils and staff. The governing body includes members who know the community well and who understand their role in promoting the Catholic identity of the school. There are plans to provide additional training especially for new governors to enable them to fulfil their leadership role more effectively. The link governor for religious education who is also the parish priest liaises closely with the school and helps to plan masses and liturgies. There is a clear vision for good quality care and education which is shared by everyone. Opportunities for pupils to show leadership through the School Council, prefects, young leaders and other systems are highly valued. Spiritual and moral development is promoted by all staff through religious education and other curriculum areas. Good relationships with home and parish are promoted effectively through meetings, newsletters, questionnaires and invitations to school and parish events. The school carries out an annual parent survey and responds to issues raised. The joint subject leader is a member of the senior leadership team and liaises closely with the link governor.

## **Grade 1**

### **The Prayer Life of the School**

Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop in the understanding and growth of their faith. Prayer and worship are integral to the life of the school and pupils are given time for meditation and reflection. Pupils are also given opportunities to write their own prayers and examples were seen during the inspection. Families and parishioners are invited to join pupils for masses in the parish church, liturgies in school and to celebrations throughout the year. Parents and pupils value the way the school supports their prayer life through information letters and invitations to school events. A grotto in the school grounds is used by pupils for quiet reflections at break times and a parents' rosary group meet there at the beginning of school every day. The school encourages pupils to participate in parish life and many pupils are

involved. School assemblies are of high quality often enhanced by gospel readings, singing, music, dance and drama. During the inspection a powerful Key Stage 1 assembly led by Year 1 pupils emphasised the importance of kindness using role play and age appropriate examples. Enthusiastic singing as parents and friends entered and left provided a joyful atmosphere. The lighting of class candles and prayers at the beginning ensured that all present felt involved. Religious education lessons often begin and end with prayers and a simple liturgy. During a Year 2 lesson the liturgy at the end was enhanced by music, lit candles and the reflections of every pupil present. Each classroom has a prayer table with pupils' work, prayers, age appropriate bibles, artefacts and pictures. The high quality of religious education displays in the corridors using prayers and reflections emphasises the centrality of prayer and worship to the life of the school.

**Grade 1**

### **How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?**

Community cohesion is excellent. The whole community is very welcoming and fosters a strong sense of belonging. School policies and practices provide equality of opportunity and strive to seek justice and fairness. Leaders promote respect for difference and value diversity. Other faiths are taught well and speakers are invited to the school to explore aspects of Judaism and Islam. Pupils are encouraged to show concern for the weak and vulnerable within and beyond their own community through fund raising for a range of charities including CAFOD, Mission Together and Cricklewood Homeless Concern. There are special links with schools in Spain and China. There are very good links with the secondary schools to which pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 2 as well as other local schools through a range of sporting and cultural activities. The school is very much involved in the local community with pupils visiting nursing homes and inviting residents to Christmas plays and the Summer Fair. Care for the environment has a high profile in the school with recycling bins for paper, clothes and shoes. Parents are encouraged to participate in the life of the school through the 'Friends of St Agnes', consultations and helping in classrooms. They value these opportunities to support their children. Partnership with the parish is excellent. Work experience and teaching practice students are welcomed by the school. The good range of extra-curricular activities recognises the variety of interests and abilities in the whole school community. The school has achieved the London Environment award, the HAPPY award, the International Schools award and National Healthy Schools status.

**Grade 1**

## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

Excellent progress is made by pupils and by the end of Year 6 standards generally meet and sometimes exceed diocesan expectations. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported and also make rapid progress. Pupils' workbooks show evidence of coverage, differentiation and a range of activities. Written work is well presented and marking is positive and interactive, enabling pupils to deepen their understanding and identify ways to improve. The assessment process enables staff to plan effectively and the school uses the new levels of attainment to level, target and plan ahead to meet the needs of individual children in religious education. The good quality of education and current focus on assessment and tracking ensure that standards are likely to be maintained or improved. The spiritual development of pupils is given a high priority and is rooted in the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church. Workbooks and conversations with pupils indicate that there are opportunities for reflection on the links between the life and teachings of Jesus and their own lives. Behaviour is excellent and pupils show respect for each other and themselves. Year 6 pupils value the opportunities given through the School Council and other school systems to make a positive contribution to the life and well being of the whole community. The school provides a good atmosphere for social and moral education and conversations with pupils indicate that this has an impact on behaviour

and attitudes demonstrated by a sense of service. Parents are given opportunities to become involved in their children's religious education through newsletters and consultation meetings.

## **Grade 2**

### **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is outstanding. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils. Lessons observed during the inspection were all outstanding and enabled pupils to engage in interesting and challenging tasks. A Reception class lesson on the theme of 'Changes' enabled pupils to appreciate the importance of the people who care for them in school and to link this with God's care for everyone. They explored this through a range of cross-curricular activities in which every child was able to explore aspects of the nature of God and the care they receive. The lesson ended with a simple liturgy where a 'thank-you' garden was made and with prayers, singing and a short reflection. Lessons observed included good use of ICT and very effective use of teaching assistants. Differentiation is in place and opportunities to enhance learning and understanding are frequent. Pupils respond to religious education lessons with interest and enjoyment. Written work is very good and well presented. Assessment is very good ensuring that tracking can accurately support pupils' learning. Monitoring is rigorous and marking is positive with suggestions for further improvements. Parents spoken to expressed a high level of satisfaction with the religious education provided by the school. They praised the good level of communication offered by all members of staff.

## **Grade 1**

### **Quality of the Curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is excellent. At least 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education which follows the 'Here I Am' programme. Staff work hard to ensure the subject has a high priority. Planning is in place and indicates that teachers are building on prior attainment and experiences. ICT is used well and the school has a good range of resources in this area. The curriculum supports the personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and they are encouraged to use their talents to benefit the school and each other through the School Council, prefects, play leaders and other systems. Opportunities for discussions are incorporated into planning. The good quality of assemblies, liturgies and masses all help pupils to understand and value their faith, as does the excellent level of involvement with the parish. Religious activities are well planned and include Reconciliation services, Gospel assemblies and Lenten and Advent services as well as masses and assemblies. Staff are encouraged and enabled to attend diocesan training which supports the religious education curriculum.

## **Grade 1**

### **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

There is outstanding leadership and management of religious education. The subject is shared between the headteacher and the subject leader who both give a high profile to the area and have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development as well as a clear vision for the faith life of the school. They attend diocesan training and encourage and enable other staff members to do so when possible. Teachers are very well supported through staff meetings and reflections before each topic. The governing body is kept well informed through reports and meetings. Religious education and the Catholic Life of the school are prominent in the School Improvement Plan. Pupils' progress in religious education is monitored to ensure that appropriate differentiated tasks are set and the more able challenged. Teaching assistants are used very effectively to support pupils during lessons. Parents are well informed about current topics in religious education and enabled to support and explore their faith with their children.

## **Grade 1**