

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

The Convent of Jesus and Mary Catholic Infants School

21 Park Avenue, Willesden, NW2 5AN

Date of inspection: 23 June 2016



A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade I

The outstanding effectiveness of classroom religious education has led to excellent religious literacy in pupils from Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 1. Rapid and accelerated progress is achieved through a variety of well-planned, focused and carefully monitored activities, tasks and on-going assessment. The electronic tracking in religious education, as for other core subjects, identifies any under-performance, which then informs a range of support and intervention for those pupils identified with additional and in many cases, highly significant additional needs. The creative, rich and dynamic curriculum is carefully planned to meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Children in Early Years and the Key Stage 1 pupils demonstrate a real 'thirst for learning.' Working in partnership with the headteacher, the subject leader has a clear and determined vision for the development of religious education. Self-evaluation is accurate. There are robust monitoring systems in place, which inform performance management and ensure that the highest expectation is demanded. Any areas identified for support are swiftly managed through a range of coaching and modelling of excellent practice. The deanery and diocesan links and other networks support the moderation and accurate levelling of attainment within the agreed understandings in religious education. The governor responsible for religious education is pro-active and regularly monitors the progress of the action plan.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade I

The outstanding provision for the Catholic life of the school is a hallmark of the commitment to the highest standards and provision. The school fully meets the 10% requirement from the Bishops' Conference. Worship, prayer and liturgical celebrations are both child led and child-centred. Pupils are articulate, confident, courteous and polite. They are growing securely in their faith and are happy to describe the importance of prayer in their daily lives. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative of the way the school inculcates the mission of the school and its place in the ecclesial family of the parish and the diocese. The parish priests and deacon are regular and welcome visitors to the school. The governing body is pro-active and fully informed through the very detailed and accurate self-evaluation, which is regularly updated informing and identifying key action areas. They have generously invested in upgrading the outdoor areas ensuring the highest quality resources are available, which are regularly audited. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their commitment to social justice and how it impacts on their 'human flourishing.'

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited ten lessons, an assembly and six acts of worship, and carried out six interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of The Convent of Jesus and Mary Catholic Infants School, Willesden Green was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Mrs Tina Cleugh
Mr. James Stacey
Mrs Elizabeth Nye

Lead Inspector
Associate Inspector
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Description of School

This Voluntary Aided school is a three form entry in the LA of Brent and the locality of Willesden Green. The school serves the parishes of St Mary Magdalen's, Willesden Green, St Joseph's Polish Church within the Parish and welcome pupils from St Agnes, Cricklewood, the Church of the Transfiguration, Willesden Green and Our Lady of Willesden. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 95.4%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 2.1% and from other Faiths 2.5%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 80%.

There are 326 pupils on roll, with 8 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Seventeen pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number: 304 3507
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Headteacher: Mrs Teresa O'Higgins
Chair of Governors: Mr. Hans Grefte

Date of previous inspection: March 2011
Previous Inspection grades: 1

Key for inspection grades:	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

The school has addressed all actions since the previous inspection. Developmental marking is now embedded for religious education as for other core subjects, in line with their review of their assessment policy. The use of the 'pink/green' pen strategy challenges pupils to develop their levels of learning in religious education and older pupils are able to make links from earlier learning, including reference to the parables. In addition the school has identified further development of their tracking system for religious education and the introduction of the new curriculum in religious education, in Summer 2015.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade I

The school fully meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). The four areas of Revelation, Church, Celebration and Life in Christ are woven through the units and topics covered across the liturgical cycle. This includes the study of other faiths, with Judaism in spring term and Islam in the summer term. The latter is reflective of the changing demographic in the community, with its neighbourhood mosque. The school have covered other world faiths on a rolling cycle. The governor responsible for religious education is also fully familiar with the RECD and is actively involved in the evaluation of the provision for religious education. The systematic study of God and the examples from the life of Jesus are woven through every aspect of the scheme being used. This is extremely well planned. The depth of learning opportunities across the phases is evident in the excellent religious literacy observed from the youngest pupils in Nursery to articulate and confident pupils by the end of Year 2. The curriculum is creatively developed through a rich and high quality range of art, drama, dance and role play. The teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. The work in the books and on display, covering the areas in the Curriculum Directory, include the events and celebrations within the liturgical cycle.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade I

The school ensures that assessment and moderation reflect the progress through the Agreed Understandings, particularly related to the planning of units taught termly. Pupils are set challenging tasks and well planned questioning ensures that they achieve at their different levels of ability. The pupils identified with special needs are targeted with carefully designed tasks. These are differentiated to enable them to make at least good progress and the use of the 'P' scales for these pupils enables teachers to track their progress effectively. This includes the use of contextual resources and apparatus to enable them to grasp the context and content of the areas being taught. The levelling of work produced by pupils is tracked electronically as for other core subjects. This enables the senior leadership team, to monitor the progress, particularly for the individual groups of pupils, such as those who pupil premium or who are summer born. The developmental marking process, using the 'pink/green' pen system, empowers pupils to further demonstrate their levels of knowledge and understanding, particularly those aspiring to the higher levels. The observation of teaching evidenced the way in which the improved planned questioning, which has been a key priority area in recent years, is effectively moving the learning on for pupils across both the Foundation Stage and Year 1. Teachers are making connections between the different areas of the

curriculum, so building the pupils' understanding and thus they too are able to make connections independently; this also empowers the more able pupils to attain higher levels confidently. There are examples of higher order vocabulary, such as 'prudence, justice and living the virtuous life,' where pupils are making clear links and connections within their own daily lives, whilst developing their religious literacy. There is evidence from the scrutiny of the work in the books and discussions with the pupils, that rapid and sustained progress in becoming religiously literate across the phases at their appropriate ages and ability levels, is a hallmark of their commitment to excellence. The use of levelling and attainment grids are being developed within schemes of work, and links succinctly to the 'Agreed Understandings' in the Levels of Attainment for religious education. The inspectors were able to see at first hand the rising higher levels for the Year 2 pupils, which is consistently developed across the three classes in the year group. The school has targeted very challenging Level 3 attainment with key action points identified from their thorough analysis.

The quality of teaching

Grade 1

The quality of teaching and its impact on learning across the school from Foundation Stage to the end of Year 2 is outstanding. The lessons are presented with a range of higher order questioning, encouraging deeper thinking and reflection on earlier learning. There is evidence of the very significant links being made through topics such as 'who is my neighbour and how do we respond to and treat them?' There was another most effective link made through the current 'Euro 2016' football championships, where pupils were able to accept and realise that despite the competitiveness 'we are all part of our football neighbours.' This was also well linked with reference to the parables such as 'The Prodigal Son' and 'Zacchaeus.' The pupils displayed their growing religious literacy and their thirst for learning is in the animated way they responded in their lessons and they clearly enjoy their learning. The outdoor area is extremely well resourced, with a range of practical and contextual activities available for the pupils to explore 'God's wonderful world.' The key words of 'love, wonderful' were used to develop their 'wow words' describing God's World as 'fantastic, amazing and splendid.' The pupils are set tasks in religious education across a range of genre, evident in the colourful and stimulating displays and the well-presented workbooks for religious education. Pupils are encouraged to learn creatively, with a variety of well - judged strategies. This was further explored by the pupils through a rich range of activities, particularly in the natural environment of their easily accessible outdoor areas. The use of the secular story of 'Mrs Pink,' most effectively enabled the pupils to make links with how they can use the 'four Cardinal Virtues' to change from being an unkind and selfish neighbour to a 'selfless and caring one.' This process was also well used through excellent engagement for those pupils identified with special needs. The adults supporting the learning for these pupils, some of whom have significant needs ensured they could access the curriculum and tasks, through for example, sequencing pictures, matching vocabulary and active role play.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. The leader of religious education is very ably supported and guided by the senior leadership team. They work in close collaboration and partnership, identifying through accurate self-evaluation, areas for priority action, ensuring the excellent rates of progress from starting points for the pupils across the phases. Pupils with SEN, disabilities and significant needs are particularly well served to attain effectively according to their levels of ability. Pupils are benefiting from a range of creative systems and structures which monitor and track progress effectively. Self-assessment is being embedded through the end of topic assessments against the levels of attainment across the phases. The accurate self-evaluation, which is shared across the school community including the governing body, is a hallmark of how the leadership of religious education is consistently striving for excellence. The headteacher constantly drives high expectations ensuring that, through her very thorough monitoring, the quality of teaching and its impact on learning in religious education is constantly improving. She drives the

action areas through purposeful and supportive strategies, including release time for the leader of religious education to observe and model good practice for less experienced and newly qualified teachers. The year groups plan together and ensure that consistency is applied including regular scheduled continuing professional development. This includes their partnerships through the deanery and wider diocesan family. The leader attends the range of diocesan in-service and network meetings. She keeps fully abreast of the initiatives including moderation, Year of Mercy programmes and disseminates the information through the half-termly and monthly schedule of school in-service. The governor responsible for religious education is a regular and pro-active visitor to the school, observing at first hand the pace and progress of the identified areas in the action plan for religious education. The headteacher ensures the governing body is kept up to date and fully informed on all aspects of the religious education action plan.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- To embed the process of the annotation of levels of support to show whether tasks are carried out independently or with support, and ensure this is consistently applied
- Ensure greater consistency across Key Stage 1 in the quality of questioning by teachers, related specifically to religious education in developing the pupil's religious literacy

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has increased its communication with parents including the religious education newsletters. They issue the weekly Wednesday Word for home and family reflection. The vast majority of parents attend the collective worship and assembly celebrations. Parents are encouraged to write comments on their child's learning in their religious education books, which are shared at parent/teacher consultation meetings. Greater links have been established with the parish priest and the deacon, who visit classes, lead liturgies and have recently supported professional development for staff. This has been especially evident in the preparation and implementation of this Holy Year of Mercy, with their 'Door of Mercy' through which they process on entry to every assembly.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade I

The school fully meets the 10% requirement set down by the Bishops' Conference for England and Wales. Religious education is taught through the cross-curricular links with personal, health, social and emotional education programmes, such as 'Circle Time.' A rich range of creative activities is delivered through art, drama, dance, singing and active role play. The school has invested generously in providing resources for active learning. The outdoor area has been developed and it provides excellent opportunities for pupils and children to deepen their faith through exploring and enjoying and natural environment, through their 'natural tunnel,' and in their 'Grotto.' This beautiful setting, with the stained glass windows, provides daily opportunities for spontaneous prayer and reflection, well situated within the re-furnished playground area. The indoor environment is enhanced with high quality religious artefacts, child-centred celebration displays across the liturgical cycle, references to the Holy Year of Mercy and statues of Our Lady. Training received by the leader for religious education is cascaded to staff through their schedule of staff inset. It is evident that religious education is at the heart of all that is planned. Key learning opportunities in religious education are woven through many areas, especially their themed topics, themed weeks and the work on the Year of Mercy. The levels of knowledge and understanding of these young pupils on the 'Virtuous Life' and how they can relate to the 'Four Cardinal Virtues' to everyday links within their local and global 'neighbours,' are a model of excellent practice. There are key questions and excellent examples of prompts and guidance in all classrooms, including key vocabulary, some in dual language, reflecting their changing community and to move pupils on in the depth of their learning.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

Grade I

The outstanding experience of Catholic worship through prayer and liturgy is the thread which is woven through every aspect of the daily life of the school. The pupils and staff are fully involved in all opportunities for worship, through a variety of age appropriate liturgies. The acts of worship seen by the inspectors provided pupils with excellent opportunities to set up the prayer focus, lead and participate in the reflections. The sense of reverence and spiritual development was powerful, as was the silence in prayer, from even the youngest pupils, and was a wonderful way for them to experience God in their daily lives. Pupils and children value the importance of stillness and quiet, whilst also enjoying their joyful participation in hymns and songs. Worship opportunities are creative, and rich. They enable the pupils to enjoy coming together as a community and value each

other's contributions. The 'Be Spirited' week adds another dimension to their prayer life, through symbolic actions such as 'placing the pebble in the water, after their prayer, as part of seeking forgiveness'. The pupils are confident to offer their own spontaneous prayers invoking support for members of their family, a sick neighbour and a range of family intentions. The richness of symbolism, use of artefacts, Bibles and reference to the Sunday Gospel, through the Wednesday Word, are all clearly evident and were highlighted by the headteacher in the assembly. The responses from the pupils indicates their high levels of religious literacy and understanding of their faith and how their prayers support them in, 'making the right choices, acting with prudence.' The value given to the children and pupils is also in the high quality displays in all classes and the public areas of the school. From the moment one crosses the threshold of the school, one realises one is on holy ground and in a Catholic school. The priests and deacon regularly support the liturgical and prayer life. They introduce the pupils and children to key Catholic symbols, such as oil, water and key liturgies such as harvest, Advent, Stations of the Cross in Lent, May Procession and the Leavers' Mass.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice

Grade I

The commitment and dedication to the Common Good and social justice is outstanding. Pupils have many opportunities to serve those less fortunate than themselves, for example the Aid for the Church in Need, the Cricklewood Homeless Centre, Cafod and The Catholic Children's Society. In Year 2 the pupils choose which charities will be prioritised for their fundraising in a democratic way by voting for their choice. There are many initiatives and activities employed for fundraising such as, 'Love in a box,' where pupils send boxes of gifts to children in Romania. This allows the school community to experience the value of the Gospel being put into practice. Children and pupils can explain why they are involved in charity work. One pupil in Year 2 said, '...we do it so we can be like Jesus.' Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds. They are courteous and polite. Their behaviour within lessons and in and around the school, is exemplary. They demonstrate excellent relationships, with each other and with the adults and visitors to the school. This is a strength of the school. The youngest pupils are supported by the older Key Stage 1 pupils, who are very proud of their roles and responsibilities. They are given many opportunities to develop their confidence and act responsibly in a variety of ways, such as 'prayer leaders, being fully involved in preparing and leading worship. The school's mission statement and 'golden rules' are shared and displayed so that pupils feel included in the school's mission and are fully aware of its high expectations.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

Grade I

The excellent partnerships between parents, the school and the parishes, are evident through the strong sense of purpose and commitment to the diocese, on behalf of the Bishop. There are a wide variety of links, which are well established through the deanery and wider diocesan partnerships. The school is central within the community and is fully engaged in welcoming the parents to all events and supporting the parish priests in the parishes serving the school. The school has fully addressed its previous action point to develop excellent links with the parish. They welcome the support from the priests in the parishes who often support the professional development for staff, such as the introduction for the Holy Year of Mercy and supporting learning in the classroom. The parents are overwhelmingly supportive and celebrate all that the school provides for their children. The parents who met the inspectors were animated in outlining '... how amazed I am with the religious words and vocabulary my daughter uses.' Parents are very proud to attend the variety and wealth of assemblies, prayer services and other acts of worship. They

described their appreciation of the school's themed assemblies, such as Mothers' Day. The school actively seeks the views of the parents on a regular basis. The recent survey was overwhelmingly positive, with 99% agreeing that the school provides excellent opportunities for their children to learn and grow in their faith journey and religious literacy.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

Grade I

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The mission statement of "together, thinking learning caring sharing becoming the people God wants us to be," is woven through every aspect of the daily life and expresses the outstanding contribution by the school. This particularly applies to the way the strategies and activities promoted by the leaders enrich their Catholic way of living. The self-evaluation accurately reflects the intense commitment by the senior leadership team. The performance management process is robust and challenging, including the mid-year review process, monitoring the effectiveness of the key objectives, for all members of the school staff. The headteacher is the driving force in partnership with her deputy headteacher and the governing body. Together they ensure that 'fullness of life' is accessible for all members of the community.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Continue to empower pupils to embed ownership on decision making about their involvement in supporting their work on Catholic social teaching