



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

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Inspection dates 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> February 2011  
Reporting Inspector Brenda Beale

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Primary
Age range of pupils	3 -11 years
Number on roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Sister Maura Halpin
School address	Coventry Road Small Heath Birmingham B10 0HT
Telephone number	0121 675 2670
E-mail address	enquiry@holyfam.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2008
DCSF School Number	330 3317
Unique Reference Number	103421

**Headteacher Mrs Marian Mulroy**

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The inspectors visited 3 full religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. She observed the school's work, including whole school Mass, staff prayers and 2 class prayer services and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and pupils' work.

## Information about the school

Holy Family is a Catholic one form entry primary school with morning nursery provision situated South of Birmingham City Centre in an area of high social deprivation. It serves the Holy Family parish of along with a large three form entry primary school. It is situated next to the church. The proportion of children with special educational needs and eligible for free school meals is not significant when compared with national data. The percentage of pupils with English as a second language is significantly above national norms. The largest ethnic group is Pakistani and the religion practised by the majority of families is Muslim. The school currently has 49 Catholic children (21%) and 25 Christian children (11%); one Hindu; the remainder being Muslim (64%) or no specified religion (4%). The number of pupils with special educational needs is not significantly different from national figures.

## Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

Holy Family is a very good Catholic school with some outstanding features. Leadership is highly effective and focused. The headteacher has an ambitious, clear and exact vision for the Catholic life of the school. Although the baptised Catholic children are in the minority the school retains a very strong Catholic ethos. All members of staff are committed to the faith and are united in their quest to provide the best opportunities for pupils' academic, social, physical, spiritual and moral development. Therefore outcomes for pupils are good. They are successful learners, behave extremely well and are keen to do well. Muslim children and pupils of other faiths and Christian denominations contribute greatly to the spiritual life of the school through their strong belief in God and respect for religious practice. The school's capacity for sustained improvement to the Catholic life of the school is excellent. The current headteacher has built on the good Catholic ethos that was already present in the school and improvement since the last inspection is marked. She has raised the visibility of the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement has been reviewed; it is clearly displayed around the school. Very good religious artefacts, signs and symbols, stained glass windows, wall paintings, displays and prayer tables all look fresh and well cared for. Issues that were raised at the time of the last inspection around the areas of teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment have all been effectively addressed and developed. Planning for future development is explicit and closely linked to timescales and cost.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Provide training for teachers to develop and embed assessment procedures. In particular ensure member of staff are familiar with levels and national expectations.
- Work with parish priest to introduce class Masses to be celebrated in school.

## How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils visibly enjoy their learning in RE and progress is extremely good. Most children make at least good progress and some make outstanding progress. Baseline assessment reveals that the majority of children enter the school with little or no knowledge of the Catholic faith. By the time they reach the end of Year 6 their knowledge is good. They make good progress because they behave well,

are keen to achieve, apply themselves diligently, are strongly motivated and they seek to produce their best work. Though pupils enter the school with little knowledge of the Catholic faith many have a great respect for God, a regard for religion and they are familiar with prayer. All pupils are well cared for and the provision for pupils with learning needs and disabilities is particularly good. Some exceptional work is being done with children with emotional and behavioural problems. Outcomes for these pupils are good because they feel safe, supported, and able to take risks and face challenge. Standards in RE are good. At the end of Key Stage 1 all pupils are familiar with the Bible and that it is a 'very holy book' that should be treated with care. They know it has two parts, Old and New Testaments. They are able to recount many stories from both Testaments and know what a miracle is, 'something amazing done by God'. The younger pupils said they really enjoy miracle stories. They have a good knowledge of baptism. They are familiar with and understand prayer both formal and private. They know that Advent precedes Christmas and that Lent precedes Easter. They can talk knowledgeably about these seasons and their liturgical colours. By the end of Year 6 the pupils' knowledge of the Bible is very good: they can talk extensively about many stories, parables and miracles. They are also able to reflect upon meaning and how these stories should impact on their lives. They have an impressive knowledge of the Sacraments, signs and symbols, prayer and the liturgical seasons of the year.

The way pupils contribute to and participate in the Catholic life of the school is extremely good. They are courteous, considerate and respectful. They are very cheerful and welcoming. They are proud of their school. They truly understand that religious beliefs and spiritual values are important and their approach to RE and worship is considered, reflective and enquiring. They feel secure in their own beliefs and can talk with maturity and knowledge about the Catholic faith and other faiths. They are keen to take on responsibilities beyond the classroom. House captains are responsible for preparing the hall for worship and assemblies; they also take turns to choose a prayer to share, this is a real help to the headteacher. Older children take on key monitor roles around the school such as supporting the dinner supervisors on the playground at lunch time, ICT monitoring, helping in the first aid room. They respond well to the needs of others beyond the school. Children are actively involved in our fund raising initiatives such as Good Shepherd Appeal, coffee mornings to fund raise for different charities, Mencap, Rwanda. Older children are personally involved in running stalls, selling raffle tickets and supporting the Reception children. They have a strong sense of justice and understand the importance of forgiveness, given and received.

The way pupils participate in the collective worship of the school is outstanding. They act with great reverence and are keen to participate without compromising their own beliefs. During whole school worship the children are invited to make the sign of the cross and pray and most pupils respond positively; those who choose not to, do sit quietly and reverently throughout the service. All pupils sing with real joy and exuberance. The children are familiar with a wide repertoire of hymns many of which are accompanied by actions that encourage the pupils' fullest participation. They are really still, calm and absorbed during times of reflection and silent prayer. The pupils prepare and lead Masses and prayer services. Two services were observed during inspection. In the Reception class the pupils passed special praying hands round: whilst they reverently grasped the hands they spoke their simple prayers and listened carefully to each other. The Year 6 service was led by the pupils with confidence and involved a well prepared prayer focus, readings, reflection, prayer and praise. Every child participated with great respect and reverence. At the Mass, attended during inspection, led by Years 2 and 4, the children read clearly and participated well. Several Muslim children were encouraged in their worship by the attendance of their parents at the celebration.

## **How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school**

Leaders and managers are very effective in developing the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher really knows her school and has effective monitoring procedures in place to inform future planning and development. She fully understands the part played by the Catholic school in the mission of the Church to bring Christ to all people. The headteacher ensures all parents fully understand and commit to Holy Family Catholic School and accept that the Christian religion is

practiced and taught. She and her team are fully committed to the development of the Catholic life of the school. This inclusive multi-faith school remains utterly Catholic in its appearance, practices and values. The headteacher is aided in her work by her exceptional organisational skills and ability to work well with others. She has built a strong team around her which is determined to retain and develop the Catholic life of the school. RE is very well led. The subject leader is an exemplary practitioner in her classroom. She has processes in place to monitor and evaluate all aspects of her subject. She displays a real passion for RE and the Faith and driven by a desire for perfection, has already done much too secure good teaching, curriculum development and assessment procedures. A pupil said that he finds his 'learning in RE really interesting and good fun'

Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties very effectively. They clearly influence the direction of the Catholic life of the school and have been particularly successful in recruiting and retaining Catholic teachers. The current chair of governors is a religious sister who has had many years of experience in Catholic education. She brings a rich dimension to governing the Catholic life of the school. The chair of governors also has responsibility for RE and is extremely active in supporting the school in its development and improvement of RE. She has conducted RE lesson observations and feedback with the subject leader and she has led staff on two retreats. One of which has led to the establishing of a Vocations Day for pupils. The chair is fully involved in the Sacramental preparation programme for Reconciliation and First Holy Communion and her particular focus is on teaching the parents and supporting them. With her guidance the governors are able to provide well-informed rigorous challenge in respect of the Catholic life of the school. The governing body sets clear performance management targets for the headteacher linked to developing the religious life of the school and regularly monitors progress made towards these targets. A Muslim parent is able bring to the governors information which ensures that the needs of the Muslim children are respected without compromising the Catholic life of the school. The governors are very aware that not only must they provide challenge but they are also active in their support of the staff and take their responsibilities towards the whole school community very seriously.

Leaders are very effective at promoting social cohesion. Inclusion, rooted in Gospel values, is at the very heart of the work of the school. School is of service to the Parish in several ways: the provision of altar servers from Years 5 and 6 children, the celebration of the Sacraments in Year 3 and Year 6, a monthly Mass involving the Parish community, and the school hall is used by the parish to hold functions and the parish Christmas Fayre. Through provision such as circle time and during discussion in RE lessons children demonstrate how much they value their own religion and understand the similarities between different religions, particularly Christian and Muslim. Through inter faith visits to different places of worship in the City, a Christian but non-Catholic church, a Jewish synagogue, a mosque and the local gurdwara the school has been able to increase the children's knowledge and understanding of other faiths in a much more practical 'hands on' way. Parents are very supportive. There is high attendance at the regular parents' evenings, 'Inspire' workshops and coffee mornings. Parents feel comfortable and at ease when talking to members of staff. The headteacher and all staff have positive relationships with parents. The school shares several fruitful partnerships with other schools. A partner school is St Bernadette's, a three form entry primary school. Both schools share Holy Family Catholic Church as their place of formal worship. Both schools liaise together preparing children in Year 3 and Year 6 to receive the Sacraments. Both schools have also collaborated in joint training initiatives for example on assessment for learning and phonics. Many pupils transfer from Year 6 into Holy Trinity or Archbishop Ilsey secondary schools and the headteacher is invited to termly cluster school meetings at Archbishop Ilsey School. Whilst only Catholic children are generally accepted at Archbishop Ilsey the transfer to Holy Trinity is more mixed with our Catholic and Muslim pupils taking up places. The school does much to prepare pupils for responsible citizenship.

## **The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education**

Teaching is highly effective. Good teaching was observed during inspection along with some outstanding teaching. Nothing inadequate was found. Outcomes and pupil attainment indicate that pupils receive good teaching. Teachers plan well and ensure a variety of activities which engage

pupils and keep their interest keen. Pupils find lessons enjoyable and one child said 'we love to learn in RE'. Teachers have high expectations and provide pupils with the support and resources they need to meet these expectations. Teachers manage behaviour extremely well. Pupils with learning needs, disabilities, emotional and behaviour problems are supported effectively by dedicated and skilled learning assistants. The books are well presented and the quantity and quality of work found in them is good and in line with the literacy books. It was particularly pleasing to see RE books are all covered in beautiful paper and pupils are requested to treat their 'Holy Book' with great care at all times. Marking is thorough and at its best is closely linked to the RE learning objects. Teachers make clear to pupils what they are expected to learn at the beginning of each unit and at the start of every lesson. All lessons observed during inspection involved prayer and time to reflect on learning. Teachers encourage thinking skills. Teachers listen to, observe and question pupils during lessons; this helps to develop and reshape activities thus providing clarification and improvement to learning. Good use is made of ICT in lessons and evidence of pupils using ICT can be found in books and on the display boards. Lessons are built upon pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers possess very good subject knowledge.

The time allocation for RE meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the curriculum fulfils the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*. The pupils follow the diocesan *Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education* which has been customised to meet the needs of groups and individuals. Teachers are supported in their planning and assessment because they have clear guidance targets for each unit of work which ensures continuity and progression in pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and key liturgical celebrations and sacraments. Sacramental preparation in Year 3 and Year 6 is taught through the designated RE strategy units of work and all pupils are involved in these lessons. The Catholic children have extra lessons outside the normal RE curriculum time to ensure they are well prepared to receive the Sacraments and there is a programme for Year 3 parents, which includes an 'Inspire morning' at St Bernadette's school. Year 6 parents attend the joint parents' meeting in preparation for Confirmation. Learning is further enriched by visits to Oscott and Alton Castle. Visits to other places of worship by Key Stage 2 children during Inter Faith Week help to bring the RE curriculum more alive for children during the time that they touch upon other faith communities in their learning. An excellent piece of work on the painting of Tobias and the Angel, led by the Year 3 teacher, had engaged the imagination of the all the pupils. It was a fruitful cross-curricular project and successfully involved the whole school. The family life and sex education curriculum has been reviewed in the last couple of years and led by a member of the local authority health education team who worked with children, parents and staff to formulate and make the programme acceptable and in line with Catholic teaching. The worship and prayer life plays a vital part in enriching the RE curriculum. Assessment is satisfactory. It is good in so far as it informs planning and curriculum provision and gives a general picture of progress made by pupils in certain units. The quality of assessment is not yet good because staff have yet to learn how to assess pupil attainment against the national levels.

The provision for collective worship is very good and central to the life of the school. A monthly first Wednesday Mass is prepared and led by each class in turn. All children in the class contribute either through the readings, psalms, bidding prayers or offertory. This is attended by parishioners who comment favourably on these celebrations. Monday morning 'whole school worship' led by the headteacher, and a Friday 'celebration assembly', prepared in turn by the house captains are weekly events. Monday morning worship is closely linked to mission and Gospel. Class prayer services have been introduced and are a great hit with both pupils and staff. Resources are good and top quality prayer areas displaying correct liturgical colours do much to focus prayer and worship. The cloths for the prayer areas were sewn by parents who met in school to carry out the work. The provision of music to enhance worship is very good and the many hymns, traditional and new, are accompanied by actions. The parish priest and the sister, who is chair of governors, support and help the staff in their provision of worship.