



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

MARYVALE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 24th -25th May 2010
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Fr David Oakley
School address	Old Oscott Hill Kingstanding Birmingham B44 9AG
Telephone number	0121 675 1434
E-mail address	enquiry@maryvale.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2007
DCSF School Number	330/3322
Unique Reference Number	103426
Headteacher	Mr Damien McGarrigle

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 7 religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning, students' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. He observed the school's work, including assemblies, 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 students' work.

Information about the school

Maryvale is an average size primary school, serving the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption. There are 227 pupils in the school and of these 73% are baptised Catholic. The majority live in the Oscott Ward which is an area of significant deprivation; 17.9% are eligible for free school meals. An increasing number of children come from fragmented and challenging family backgrounds. Prior attainment on entry is below average. The present headteacher has been in post for two years, and has brought a welcomed stability and strong leadership resulting in remarkably rapid improvement.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

Maryvale ensures a good Catholic education for all its pupils. Under the leadership of the headteacher the school has made great advances. The improvement has been warmly welcomed and endorsed by parents, pupils, staff and governors. Particularly strong is the renewed vigour and real impact of the Catholic ethos of the school. Pupils respond proactively and enthusiastically to the good provision for collective worship. The parish church is situated nearby and presents many opportunities for involvement of the children in the parish, part of the wider mission of the Church.

Outcomes from the religious education programme are good and improving further, as the quality and impact of teaching itself improves. Good learning and progress are the result of the overall good teaching they receive. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the others because of extra support in lessons and when they are given work which matches their learning needs. The religious education programme makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. The areas noted for development at the last inspection are being effectively addressed, particularly the impact of monitoring and assessing both progress in religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The senior leadership has demonstrated its ability to bring about secure improvement, is very clear what the priorities are for future development, and has set measurable and achievable targets for the short and long term. The governing body plays a significant role in supporting the senior leadership in bringing about further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the assessment and marking of pupils' work is consistent, so that it informs teaching and shapes lesson objectives to meet more accurately their personal learning needs; in particular, provide real challenge for the more able pupils.
- Encourage pupils to write more at length and more reflectively in response to what they are being taught.
- Plan imaginatively a richer involvement in the local and wider community.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Standards of attainment and achievement in religious education are well in line with what is expected at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Achievement and progress in lessons can be variable and depends crucially on the quality of the teaching, but the picture overall is a good one. Pupils progress quickly in the earlier years absorbing key concepts and the basic tenets of the Faith. By the end of Year 6 their knowledge and understanding are sound and they are able to explain and discuss the life and message of Jesus. The progress made by less able pupils and those with special educational needs is good, because of the extra support in lessons and work which is matched to their abilities. In lessons pupils work well, especially when they are challenged and engaged by effective teaching strategies, which involve them in activities and peer learning. The more able pupils would benefit from more challenging tasks to meet their particular learning needs. All pupils would benefit from further opportunities to express their thoughts and reflections in more extended, imaginative writing.

Students are fully involved in, and make a good contribution to, the Catholic life of the school. Different groups are given responsibilities, such as peer mentors, play leaders, members of the school council, and altar servers. For example, on their own initiative, they give self-made certificates to the younger children to reward their efforts in games. The school's own surveys indicate that they can identify the shared values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the school, and they value these in their attitude to others, their good behaviour, and the pride they feel at being part of the school. They are able to explain the school mission statement in their own words and with real conviction. They contribute feedback on their school life, and their views on how to live out the mission of the school are actively sought. Many are involved in fund raising, and take part in outreach to the community. They discuss and come to understand more the issues of poverty and injustice, and through supporting organisations such as CAFOD, feel they are contributing and making a difference to the lives of others.

The pupils eagerly take part in the programme of collective worship, for instance, in Advent and Lent, the Rosary, the Angelus, the Family Days. They are developing well the skills of planning and presenting their own assemblies and liturgies, an aspect that the school is pressing on further to improve. For example, house captains plan and lead assemblies on the house saints and the saints of the British Isles. They now play a more active part in the celebration of Mass and particularly enjoy singing the new hymns they have learned. The class Mass during the inspection was carefully prepared, readings and prayers rehearsed beforehand and confidently and clearly read, and the singing joyful. They compose and use some beautiful and heartfelt prayers of their own. The Reception pupils learn to pray and make the Sign of the Cross well and come to understand the special and reverent nature of prayer time very quickly. Proper emphasis is placed on the wider mission of the Church integrating the school particularly in the thorough preparation of the pupils for the sacraments. The parish priest is an always available and supportive figure in the celebration of the Mass and the Sacraments, and in his role as link governor for religious education

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

Leaders and managers are intimately involved and concerned in preserving and nurturing the special ethos of the school and consequently promote the Catholic life of the school with great success. The Catholic environment of the school is now regularly audited, monitored and evaluated, so that the mission of the school is effected in its daily life. The staff are themselves supported by regular in-service education on the spiritual and Catholic nature of the school including school cluster staff days at Oscott to reflect on, for example, the liturgy of the Word. The governors are anxious to deepen their knowledge of their responsibilities and keen to support in any way they can. Their role in providing effective challenge and support is good and they take a firm stand and initiate action where necessary to ensure pupils receive good quality teaching. The inspiring leadership of the headteacher, who has taken on the RE co-ordinator role, has galvanised the whole school community into a new sense of purpose and challenge and is driving up standards of attainment. Many initiatives are in place but not yet fully embedded. Collective worship is likewise

monitored and planned to ensure a good provision for assemblies and liturgies. The outcomes of good leadership and management are seen in the high morale of the staff, the pupils' good behaviour and care for others, and the very good relationships between pupils and staff.

The leadership and management of RE has been taken on by the headteacher on the departure of the RE co-ordinator at Christmas. It is a holding situation at present, but his leadership of the subject has proved very effective and has created a fresh approach and interest. Priorities are clearly laid out and planned for in detail and, through lesson observation and subject reviews, the quality of teaching and learning is steadily improving. This is impacting on standards of attainment, which are likewise steadily rising.

Governors and senior staff have a clear policy to promote community cohesion with the result that the school has an openness to all, all are included in its life, and pupils generously take the opportunity to become involved to the local community. Those of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their beliefs comfortably. Students explore other faiths in appropriate depth through the RE curriculum as well as experiencing other cultures through One World Week, fundraising for CAFOD and other charities, and a possible link with a school in South America. All groups of students feel included and welcomed into every aspect of the school's life. More visits and residential experiences are planned and the school recognises this is an area to be developed further and has planned accordingly.

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

The pupils benefit from teaching that is generally good and which encourages more independent learning. The school is aware of teaching that falls short of satisfactory and is working hard to secure good learning for those pupils. Good lessons engage pupils because they are challenging, especially when thinking and evaluating skills are integrated in the lesson, and when much is expected from them in contributing to their own learning. They blossom when lessons have good provision for activities and collaborative learning. In one lesson on Pentecost paired and group work was used to good effect in discussing how we are the Church today and the qualities needed to be an apostle in today's society. Satisfactory lessons are less well pitched and too vaguely planned to meet the specific needs of all students especially the more able. The teacher talks for too long to diminishing effect, sometimes covering knowledge that they already have, so the result is that they do not progress as well as they could. Assessment procedures and the tracking of each individual's progress have been introduced, and together with the growing use of level indicators, are beginning to provide a sharper picture of progress and attainment. The scrutiny of written work shows that helpful marking is beginning to make a real difference, but the quality is not yet consistent in all classes. Peer assessment allows children to praise each other's work and learn from the ensuing discussion.

The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of students successfully, following *the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education* requirements, such as the allocation of time. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly in Year 5 and Year 6. Weekly liturgical music workshops are run by a well-known diocesan musician. Cross-curricular and themed days enrich the children's cultural understanding: for instance, One World Week and Inspire workshops. The sacramental preparation programme is well planned and run by the school in close collaboration with the parish. The beliefs of other faiths are touched on in RE and enriching experiences, such as visits to other places of worship, are being planned, including residential days and days of recollection. Resources are satisfactory and well managed. Art, music and ICT, are all used imaginatively to support and colour the learning experience through beautiful and inspiring displays on the walls of the corridors and classrooms. The curriculum makes a significant impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Provision for collective worship is good. The close proximity of the parish church is an excellent resource, not least because of the contact with parishioners who are present at the Masses. There is time made during the day for spiritual nourishment through prayer and reflection. The liturgical seasons are well marked and celebrated, particularly Advent and Lent.