



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

OUR LADY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 15th -16th June 2011
Reporting Inspector Teresa Quick

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11years
Number on roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Pauline Egan
School address	East Meadway Tile Cross Birmingham B33 0AU
Telephone number	0121 464 4459
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Date of previous inspection	June 2008
DCSF School Number	330/3357
Unique Reference Number	103449

Headteacher Mr Damian Ward

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by a Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 3 full religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. She observed the school's work, including Mass and assembly 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

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average size primary school with 70% of the pupils baptised Catholics. The school is close to the parish church of Our Lady Help of Christians. There are now 57% British pupils in the school from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. This is an increase of 33% in the last 4 years. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average. The school is situated in an area of high unemployment. Attainment on entry is below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

Our Lady's is an outstanding school. The headteacher, well supported by his deputy headteacher, provides excellent leadership. There is a clear uncompromising vision for this Catholic school fully shared by the governors and staff and having the support of the parents. There has been good improvement since the last inspection due to the clear direction of the leadership, good teaching and excellent care for the pupils. Leadership of the subject is good. All pupils and parents are welcome. It is a calm well organised school. This is a happy supportive environment for pupils. Pupils understand the mission of the school. They feel safe and secure within school. Pupils have respect for teachers and those in authority and each other. All staff support the ethos of the school. The Catholic ethos radiates throughout the school in all that they do. The provision for Collective worship and the spiritual and moral development of the pupils is excellent. This is central to the life of the school. There is outstanding participation in collective worship. The nurturing of the pupils' prayer life is a school priority. Pupils come into school with limited understanding of the faith or prayer. The quality of the provision for RE is good. Pupils achieve well because of the good quality, interesting teaching, broad curriculum and their enjoyment of learning in RE. By Year 6 pupils overall reach at least the satisfactory standards expected of them. Behaviour is good. Morale is high and pupils are proud of their school. Assessment is developing well and is beginning to bring about further improvement in learning. There are excellent links with the parish and the local community. The school lives its mission statement well at being a welcoming Catholic community where they pray, live and learn together following the example of Jesus Christ.

With the present leadership the school's capacity for sustained improvement in RE and the Catholic life is good. The leaders of the school have a clear picture of the RE and the Catholic life and the next steps needed for further improvement. They are focused on helping each individual achieve their full potential. All staff, the parish priest and governors are supportive and work towards the aims of the school. The governing body is well informed about RE and the Catholic life of the school through both formal processes and informal contact with the school. They work closely with the school to set direction and monitor progress which is written and detailed and links to the school self-evaluation report.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum for RE so that it becomes more cohesive and includes all elements of RE and with clear links to other subjects.
- Develop the programme of assemblies to include greater pupil participation and differing types of prayer.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Standards are satisfactory and progress is good with pupils enjoying their learning in RE. Pupils come into school with very little appreciation of the Gospel or of Jesus Christ and especially limited understanding of being part of God's family but they quickly access the rites and rituals associated with being part of the community of Our Lady's. Pupils get quickly involved in the prayer life of the school. From a low starting point the pupils make good progress in RE and reach at least satisfactory standards because of the quality of the teaching and the ethos of the school. The school is focused on pupils' reaching their full potential thus enabling some pupils in Year 6 to reach at least good standards of knowledge and understanding and produce some high quality written work. Pupils settle quickly to their work and discuss constructively and with empathy. Pupils work well together in pairs or small groups. As work is carefully matched to the pupils' needs, they make good progress. Pupils with particular learning needs have targeted help in order that they achieve well. Generally written work shows clear progression. There is a range of different and interesting styles of recording showing a wide breadth of the curriculum. Standards in RE are expected to match the same good standard that they do in other curricular areas. Pupils enjoy RE and the longer they are in school the more aware they become of the importance of faith in their lives. Good foundations are laid in the teaching and learning in RE in the Reception Year and Key Stage 1. Year 2 speak well about Our Lady the patron of the school and can retell stories from the Old and New Testaments. As a result of the work during the early years, more rapid development occurs between Years 3 to 6. Pupils' responses have improved because of the way they have been taught to think. There is good quality discussion and application of RE skills. Pupils have become reflective and are able to look objectively at global faith issues. Confirmation has been the high point of the religious education this year for Year 6. They talked with enthusiasm and knowledge. Pupils were involved with the review of the mission statement and have included a special pupils' statement: "Follow your dreams using the light of Christ."

The extent to which pupils contribute to Catholic life is good. They benefit greatly from the Catholic life. The pupils from their early days in school are caught up in the Catholic life which permeates the school and rise to the expectations of the school. The school, with support from the regular visits from the priest, enables the pupils to develop spiritually and morally. They soon learn right from wrong and learn how to self correct and modify their behaviour. They understand and absorb the values of the school where everyone is valued and respected. Pupils in Year 6 are confident that bullying does not occur in the school. Pupils treat each other fairly and with respect and are encouraged in the first instant to try and solve disagreements amongst themselves. Politeness is rewarded and encouraged at all times and is modelled by the staff. Social and cultural development is also of high quality.

The pupils' response to collective worship is outstanding. The Mass during the inspection was well planned and pupils responded with reverence and dignity. This contributes significantly to the pupils' spirituality. They sang with enthusiasm. Pupils' behaviour was excellent throughout the Mass. A number of parents, governors and parishioners joined the pupils for the Mass ensuring that this was a community occasion. All children as they move through the school have the opportunity to read at Mass or in a prayer service. It is a priority in the school development plan to celebrate the feasts of Our Lady and this has impacted on the pupils' knowledge and understanding of Our Lady as seen through the eyes of Christians from different cultures. There are special Masses or prayer services for the feasts of Our Lady and at key points in the Church's year. The key stage assembly during the inspection was teacher led. Pupils participated in the drama as the story unfolded; opportunities for quiet prayer and spontaneous prayer were missed. Pupils listened and learned and behaviour was excellent. Prayer continues to develop in the school. Pupils have a developing knowledge of the traditional prayers of the Church and they are able to write and say their own. Prayers are said at particular points in the school day. Pupils are involved in preparing penitential prayers for Lent and advent services and bidding prayers for some Masses. At present, pupils have limited involvement in the planning of other spiritual events. The very recently constructed and beautiful prayer garden is now ready for use to add a new dimension to the prayer life of the school and the pupils' spiritual development. Pupils' personal and religious development is significantly impacted upon by the dedicated care and guidance they receive.

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

The leadership of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher sets high expectations for all members of the school community. The ethos is outstanding. There is a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils and together with the priest and governing body staff work with enthusiasm. Unlike at the time of the last inspection, there is clear and recorded monitoring of the Catholic life of the school in particular in the school's self evaluation report which is a live document. The self evaluation booklet aids the leadership team to focus on the areas of strength and development during the year. Assembly observations and feedback from the pupils have led to changes in the key stage assemblies to incorporate SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) rather than in the whole school assemblies which are rooted in the Sunday Gospel readings. As a result the staff and the governors are dedicated to improving the outcomes for the pupils. From the school entrance, the school hall and all around the school there are displays, crucifixes, statues and artefacts that remind everyone that this is a Catholic school. From their visits to the school and reports from the headteacher, governors are aware of the developments with the Catholic life of the school and what needs to be improved. Since the last inspection there is a link governor for RE. This is a developing role. He is fully aware of the Catholic life of the school and is part of the monitoring process and the ideas for improvement formally reported on by the headteacher. The school works well to improve the needs of the Catholic life of the school community. The link governor's role is now moving into the curriculum for RE.

The subject leader has been appointed to the role since the last inspection. She has good subject knowledge and ably supports teachers. She has the knowledge and enthusiasm to take the subject forward. She knows the needs of the school, individual pupil needs and what should be the next area for development. She is part of the monitoring and evaluation programme which has led to the RE self evaluation booklet. She has updated governors on the progress of RE. Governors fulfil their canonical responsibilities well and are active in shaping the direction of the school. The regular visits to the school by the governors ensure they are aware of the Catholic life and its needs. Standards that pupils achieve are at least satisfactory as pupils have benefited from good teaching. The regular visits from the parish priest have a beneficial effect on the Catholic life and the pupils' participation. Pupils from the school serve at Mass both in school and at the parish Sunday Masses. The leadership team are never complacent and look for ways to improve the outcomes for the pupils. Where possible the school extends the pupils' understanding of their Catholic heritage with visits to their own parish church and to St Chad's Cathedral.

The school makes excellent provision for community cohesion. The staff reflect the diversity of the school community. Pupils work and play together and are supportive of each other. The school is integrated into the parish life. The school makes positive links to involve and integrate as far as possible the sacramental preparations and celebrations of those pupils in non Catholic schools with those of the parish school. Parish groups helped raise money for the last 2 residential trips for Y6 pupils, to Alton Castle and Brockleton Centre. These visits linked with other schools provide good support for the development of Catholic life. Pupils develop their understanding of justice and peace through their RE teaching, assemblies, SEAL and the ethos of the school. Pupils have been generous in their support of various charities which include the Good Shepherd collection, the Rwanda Appeal, the Pattaya Orphanage Trust and Lepira. They are developing an understanding of the global nature of the Church and have studied how Our Lady has been depicted in different parts of the world. Pupils learn about other faiths and benefit from visits and visitors to the school and the work during Black History month. The leadership promotes strong links with in the locality, with schools in the Education Action Zone and with a local special school. They take part in many of the city events for primary schools. There is a school council and members of the school have been active locally in support of actions to improve the neighbourhood. There are close links with the local Catholic schools, the 2 main Catholic high schools to which most pupils transfer and the Birmingham Catholic Partnership and their Catholic cluster group.

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

The quality of teaching is good. The judgement was made from teaching seen and the quality and breadth of the evidence in the pupils' books, from displays and from discussion with pupils. Teachers teach from the units of the *Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education*. The subject leader monitors progression from the planning, assessments, book trawls and lesson observations. The lesson observations form part of the assessment programme for core subjects. Planning lacks a holistic approach over the school and the wider RE curriculum. The curriculum is broad but needs a whole school plan to incorporate RE with identified links to other subjects available for all staff. Teachers have developed a good knowledge of the curriculum and employ a good range of teaching styles and ideas to motivate the pupils to ensure that there is good learning. Teachers' questioning skills are good. Pupils are encouraged to think. Pupils in Year 6 are capable of deep individual thinking. Teachers convey confidence to the pupils. Some skilled teaching assistants provide a very good level of support in particular providing for pupils who require more support. Pupils say they enjoy RE lessons; they are enthusiastic and well motivated. Pupils' behaviour in all lessons was excellent. Written work showed many different ways of recording and matched pupils' needs. Marking is positive but there is limited support for improvement in pupils' learning. Written work generally matches pupils' needs. ICT is used for research to support learning. The assessment process is developing and is becoming one of the tools to support planning for pupils' individual needs. Resources are sufficient for the needs of the curriculum. The school is committed to providing focused and targeted professional development which impacts directly on performance and results. The year started with a retreat day for staff at the RE department. Now that the new buildings are complete, a central resource area is envisaged. Topic boxes of artefacts are being developed. Music to provide for differing occasions is being collected. Some teaching showed excellent links to the literacy curriculum. There are informal links to PSHE, music, art and SEAL. Teaching about other religions supports the greater understanding of the beliefs of other groups of people. Pupils were proud that two of the Muslim pupils talked to the classes about their faith and showed them artefacts that support their practice. As with family life and sex education they form part of the RE curriculum. Sex and relationship education follows the diocesan scheme *All that I am* for Years 5 and 6. Enrichment activities including the vocations week featuring different types of vocation make the RE curriculum increasingly relevant to the pupils' lives outside school. The Catholic life of the school and religious education always form part of the school focus for development. RE is taught as a discrete subject but can also form part of cross-curricular work. The percentage of time allocated to RE is at least in line with that agreed by the Bishops' Conference.

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Evidence shows that much work is being done to develop the prayer life of the school. Each classroom has a prayer focus with appropriate artefacts. Prayer is an important part of the school day. All pupils take part in different liturgies linked to the Church's year. Collective worship supports pupils' spiritual and moral development well. Very good support is provided for the non Catholic and newly qualified staff in developing their knowledge for preparing Masses and other spiritual events and in the planning of learning in RE. There are special celebratory Masses during the sacramental training period. Pupils are very well prepared for the reception of the sacraments. There are meetings in school to help parents to be supportive of their children's learning in RE and planning is in place to develop this further.