



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST AUGUSTINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL COVENTRY

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Inspection dates 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> October 2010  
Reporting Inspector Teresa Quick

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Canon Tom Farrell
School address	Heathcote Street Radford Coventry CV6 3BL
Telephone number	02476 596988
E-mail address	admin@st-augustines.coventry.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	December 2007
DCSF School Number	331/3422
Unique Reference Number	103720

**Headteacher** Mrs Gillian Deery

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 5 full religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. She observed the school's work, including Mass and prayer services. She 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

St Augustine's is an average sized Catholic primary school that is one of three Catholic schools in the parish of Christ the King. At present the intake is 45 each year. It serves a densely populated area recognised as an area of deprivation close to the city centre. The school has the benefit of a church served from Christ the King on the school site. There are 281 pupils on roll of whom 61% are baptised Catholics. This is a reduction from the 85% at the time of the last inspection. The remaining pupils are of other Christian faiths, of no faith or Hindu. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average and the number of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. Pupils with English as a second language are a rising group. Pupils of Polish and Tamil origin form the majority of the group.

## Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

St Augustine's is a good Catholic school with a strong Catholic ethos. The quality of provision in RE means that all groups of pupils make satisfactory progress and reach standards that are broadly average. Pupils are encouraged to relate their learning to their own circumstances and this is reflected in the contributions they make towards the Catholic life of the school. Pupils understand the mission of the school: "A learning community united by Christ and the teachings of the gospel". It is at the centre of all the school does. It is the focus for staff, governors and pupils enabling them all to flourish. Pupils understand that they are all loved equally by God. They are happy, enthusiastic learners who behave well, are increasingly self-disciplined and are keen to learn. Pupils participate very well in collective worship and with the staff they take the lead in preparing and delivering some of these. Partnerships with parents, the parish and the community are strong.

The quality of teaching in RE is satisfactory with some good teaching observed. Planning is based upon the diocesan *Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education*. Monitoring and assessment had been limited but the headteacher and subject leader have now planned these aspects into the annual programme. Assessment using the recently produced attainment levels is in the early stages of development. It has yet to become a tool which responds to the various needs and abilities of the pupils. The teachers adapt the diocesan strategy to meet the needs of their mixed age classes. The curriculum has been enriched with visits, retreats and speakers. The school makes good provision for collective worship. Pupils are offered a variety of different opportunities to engage in differing prayer experiences and in varied settings.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement in its Catholic life is good. Improvement will be within a setting where there is a strong Catholic ethos is embedded with distinct Catholic aims. The strong new leadership has as a priority and the vision to develop further the quality of Catholic life and religious education. The management team has accurately identified the needs of the school and they form key areas in the recently produced school development plan. These clear plans have yet to fully impact. At present the staff, governors and pupils are not fully involved in whole school evaluation in RE. The governors are now led by the recently appointed chair of governors who is also the parish priest. He is well informed about the Catholic life of the school through his own involvement and the reports from the previous headteacher to the governing body. Together with the recently appointed headteacher and the subject leader planning is in place for them to work closely together with the governors and staff to develop the RE curriculum and monitor progress. They aim to lead the staff towards ownership of the development plan.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Further support the development of RE within the school and enhance the strategic role of the subject leader.
- Provide appropriate training to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching in RE.
- Review the whole curriculum for RE and develop further assessment within RE to meet the needs of the individual pupils.

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

Generally all pupils make satisfactory progress in the RE lessons observed. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special needs, with carefully targeted support, also make satisfactory progress. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons because of the differing activities and the way work is matched to ability. From a low starting point, pupils' attainment in Year 6 progresses to be broadly average. Written work generally matches that seen in the English books. Pupils enjoy their learning in RE. In Key Stage 1 pupils understand why we pray, are familiar with some of the traditional prayers of the Church and are capable of short meditative prayer. They have a value of the week to which they are encouraged to aspire. In Year 2 pupils spoke confidently about their knowledge of the faith. They know a number of the stories from the Old Testament; they understand stories from the life of Our Lord and have an appropriately sound knowledge of the traditional prayers of the Church and those children's prayers suitable for their age group. They joyfully burst into the singing of "Hallelu Hallelu". Pupils in Year 6 have a good knowledge of Old Testament stories and the miracles of Jesus. They are developing a good knowledge and respect for other faiths. They have learned a great deal from visits and visiting speakers and the whole Catholic ethos. Pupils spoke of the variety of approaches used during RE lessons. They spoke particularly enthusiastically about the use of drama.

Pupils make good contribution to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school. The older pupils can explain the meaning of the school mission statement. Pupils recognise the importance of their faith and understand the value of prayer. They appreciate that everyone is created and loved by God. They understand how important faith is to people of different religions. The introduction of a value of the week helps to focus the pupils' spiritual and moral development. The Catholic ethos shared with the whole school community is very strong within the school. This is the real strength of the school. Pupils care for one another. They feel safe, secure and valued. New pupils feel welcomed. There are warm relationships between adults and pupils, pupils and pupils. One pupil said "Here we have friends across the genders and from different countries". Pupils benefit from the very good quality of the care, guidance and support they receive throughout the school's work. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are cared for extremely well, ensuring the well being of all pupils. The learning mentor helps support the staff to this end. She is also running Rainbows which like the other support groups is showing much success for pupils of these vulnerable groups. They enable them to make good progress in their personal, spiritual and moral development.

Pupils' response to collective worship is good. The parish clergy are actively involved in the liturgical life of the school. Pupils understand the importance of prayer in the life of the school and participate respectfully and reverently. It is impressive the way Key Stage 1 pupils during prayers in their RE lessons can meditate and reflect quietly and write their own prayers. The school has the benefit of a prayer garden and the church close by. At the Harvest Mass during the inspection pupils followed the Mass reverently, they responded and sang well. Behaviour was very good. There were a large number of parishioners and parents ensuring that this was truly a community celebration. Many pupils were involved as readers, singers and altar servers. Members of the Legion of Mary visit the school weekly to give the pupils the opportunity to pray the rosary together in the lunchtime. Displays around the school contribute to the development of the pupils' understanding and Catholic life. The large displays and involvement in the Papal Visit enabled pupils to appreciate the position of the Pope and global nature of the community of the Church. Pupils are familiar with a range of

different prayer styles and appreciate and gaining an understanding that those of other backgrounds have different ways of praying. Once a month pupils have the opportunity to read and take part in a parish Sunday Mass.

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

The school leadership is good and is committed to improving the Catholic life of the school. The governors and the senior leadership team aim to provide the best experience of Catholic life within a multi-faith and multi-cultural setting. Catholics and those of other faiths play a part in the Catholic life of the school and parish by supporting Catholic activities. The school has a strong well embedded prayer life in which staff, parents, members of the parish community and the parish clergy are actively involved. Monitoring of Catholic life and discussions leading to change and improvement had been carried out on an informal basis. Change is underway and the school leaders and managers understand the need to evaluate and reflect together formally upon aspects of the school's life and work, leading to priorities for the development plan for the benefit of the pupils. The RE subject leader has made a very good start to this her first school year of full subject leadership and together with the headteacher and the chair of governors they form a strong team to lead the development of religious education in the school. The development plan formulated since the arrival of the headteacher has RE and its leadership as key areas for development work in the school showing the importance given to the subject. Plans are now in place to enhance the strategic role of the subject leader to ensure the regular monitoring of teaching and learning through more lesson observations and book trawls. Targets in RE will be monitored through these lesson observations and book trawls, together with pupil interviews and planning scrutiny so the impact can be reviewed. At present staff are supported with their individual planning by the subject leader and experienced teachers of RE. Assessment and monitoring are in the early stages of development so action planning is not yet responding sufficiently to evaluation.

The governing body is complete. The chair of governors is very supportive of the school and has a good knowledge and understanding of the strengths and areas that require development. His knowledge of the school comes not only from the previous headteacher's reports to governors and the minutes of the ethos committee but from his regular visits to the school, accompanying visits linked to the RE curriculum and also from the contact the other clergy in the parish have with the school. The governors are now assuming their monitoring role, challenging and supporting the development of RE. Previously informal discussions had taken place. There are excellent relations between the governors, the headteacher and subject leader.

The school's strong Catholic ethos promotes a shared vision. Pupils are happy to take responsibilities within classrooms and through the school council. Everyone is valued and differences respected. This is communicated at all levels of school life: liturgy and curriculum. The school celebrates its life as a Catholic community united by the teaching of the Gospel. Pupils are made aware, through their learning in RE and visits to places of worship, the significance of religious practice in other world faiths. Pupils in the school from other faith backgrounds are given opportunities to share aspects of their faith. In a lesson on the Rosary pupils were seen to show a real interest in the importance of prayer to people of the Hindu faith when the beads they use to support their prayer were shown. Pupils understand the importance of respecting every person because we are all God's children. Pupils show a commitment to justice, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. This is a fair-trade school and supports a number of charities throughout the year especially in Advent and Lent when there is an emphasis on fund raising for those who are in need. From visiting speakers pupils learn of the lives of others. Pupils also recognise the importance of helping people through prayer and are encouraged to remember that we are all equal in the eyes of God. Fund raising through CAFOD gives them an understanding of the global nature of the Church. The school has close links with the other schools in the parish, the local primary schools and the Catholic high school, to which most of the pupils transfer. They take part annually in the Coventry *Big Sing* involving the Coventry primary schools. The school has recently received "Involve Accreditation," an award is given for participation in the school and community.

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but with good and very good lessons observed during the inspection. There has been a period of high staff turnover and as a result there have been limited opportunities for training in the teaching of RE for those new to the school. Thus there is some inconsistency of quality of teaching. The leadership team has begun to establish strategies to ensure greater consistency. The staff are an enthusiastic team aiming to do their best for the pupils. Planning is agreed across the key stages using the diocesan *Strategy for Religious Education*. Individual teachers effectively plan for the differing needs within their class. Teachers employ a range of teaching styles and activities with different learners. There is an increasing number of pupils entering the school with English as an additional language. With the very good support, these pupils are achieving to the same extent as their peers. No ICT use in RE was observed. Some teachers have a limited knowledge of the diocesan RE scheme which impacts on pupils' learning. Work observed in the pupils' books ranged from a limited quantity in some to others which are outstanding in variety and content, produced in differing ways, well marked and giving pointers towards further learning. Marking lacks consistency but there is some exceptional practice. All staff are positive in their marking. Pupils learn because behaviour is good. They learn not just in lessons but from other sources, such as, assemblies, Mass and by absorbing the whole Catholic ethos of the school.

Assessment is in place and being developed to allow staff to evaluate pupil progress. Pupil self assessment is evident and being developed as part of the teaching and learning process. However the school is in the early stages of developing assessment using the national levels of attainment to inform planning and allow underachievement to be identified and tackled.

The contribution of the curriculum to spiritual and moral development is good as this aspect of the school's work is threaded through its daily life, both in its taught curriculum and in formal and informal interactions with the pupils. The RE curriculum is based on the diocesan *Strategy for Religious Education*. At present it is adapted by the teachers to meet the needs of the learners. The subject leader has yet to gain a complete overview of the curriculum as the school is still following the systems employed in the previous year with planning being given to the subject leader each half term, after the lessons have been taught. The RE curriculum lacks cohesion. Overall, essential elements of the RE curriculum are taught and, through the teaching and strong Catholic ethos, assemblies and Mass, the pupils have the opportunity to learn all that would be expected of their age. Family life follows the diocesan *All that I am* scheme. Pupils benefit from PSHE and the SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) programme. Children learn about other religions and cultures through specific lessons and assemblies, from members of staff, outside speakers and visits to places of worship. The curriculum has good enrichment activities that include retreats to Princethorpe Retreat Centre and Alton Castle, visits to St Chad's Cathedral and Oscott College. Pupils enjoy these experiences; they help them appreciate the importance of faith and religion and widen their knowledge of their Catholic cultural heritage. The school works closely with the parish in preparing the pupils for the Sacraments. There are meetings for the parents and special celebratory Masses. Displays of pupils work in Church linked to the Sacraments further links the school and parish in this preparation.

Provision for collective worship is good. Pupils have many opportunities for prayer that include formal and more reflective experiences, including simple meditation. Prayer in the school reflects the liturgical seasons, local and global events and other faiths. It offers pupils experience of the traditional liturgies of the Church such as the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary. The good prayer life of the school is embedded and is maintained by the whole staff. Through the regular hymn practices a range of hymns and songs that suit the different ages of pupils including traditional and modern are enjoyed. The recently introduced prayer bag initiative encourages prayer at home with the family.