



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School

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DfE Number: 8463311

Headteacher: Ms Carmel Hughes
Chair of Governors: Dr Sameer Bagaeen

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 15 March 2012
Date of previous inspection: 13 June 2007

Lead Inspector: Mr Michael Sheridan
Associate Inspector: Mrs Angela Ireland

Description of School

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Brighton Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by Brighton and Hove Local Authority. The principal parish the school serves is St John the Baptist, Brighton. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 65%, an increase from 41% at the previous inspection. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 206. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals stand at 18.9% and is above average. Around 30 pupils (approximately 14.6% of pupils on roll) receive extra support in class which is below the national average (approximately 19.3% of pupils on roll). Most children are from White British backgrounds but around 35.4% of pupils are from other cultural heritages, the largest proportion of which is Asian at 7.7%. The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is above average at 20.8%.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St John the Baptist is a good school with many outstanding features which identify it as a caring Catholic community. The new Vision and Mission Statement, 'Learning and Growing Together, Unique in God's Eyes', was blessed by the Bishop, following a rigorous and comprehensive consultation process with all sections of the school community leading up to its launch in October 2011. The school is committed to the wellbeing of the pupils so that, in the words of the Mission Statement, '[They] will lead by example, by striving to live the message of the gospels in [their] interactions with each other and in [their] commitment to prayer and worship'. This is lived out in the excellent relationships between pupils and staff and also amongst the pupils together with the outstanding prayer life of the school. The headteacher, together with the governors and the senior leadership team, has worked diligently to provide a strong strategic direction for the school which has led to a very strong Catholic ethos with good provision and high standards in Religious Education. One parent remarked, 'I feel [the headteacher] has brought a strong Catholic ethos to the school since her time [here]. Catholic values are brought into the children's learning.' The school has successfully addressed all the key issues identified in the last inspection. By virtue of its accurate self-evaluation and robust planning, the school has an excellent capacity to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build upon the good pupil consultation processes already in place to ensure that pupils' ideas and opinions are regularly sought with regard to their own learning

- Continue to develop Assessment for Learning in Religious Education so that developmental marking is consistently applied throughout the school, including informing pupils what steps to take in order to move to the next level
 - Further develop the tracking of pupils' progress in Religious Education through the more systematic use of assessment data
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The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

Grade 1

The headteacher is a dynamic and very spiritual leader. She shares her vision extremely well with all stakeholders in the school and, along with the governors, sets the strategic direction so that both Catholic ethos and school improvement are at the top of the agenda. The newly appointed deputy headteacher shares this vision and works effectively with the experienced Religious Education co-ordinator. Governors are proactive in supporting the senior leadership team and also holding the team to account when the need arises. They attend Diocesan training and were active participants in an INSET day focusing on the school's self-evaluation of Religious Education. As a result of this good practice, they are very well informed and make a significant contribution to the strategic overview of the Catholic life of the school and of Religious Education. The newly revised Mission statement is embedded in every aspect of school life and has formed the foundation of the school's accurate self-evaluation. The school is to be highly commended on the way in which the Mission Statement went out to consultation and forms a firm foundation for the continued development of the Catholic life of the school and for school improvement. Parents are very supportive of the school and feel empowered by the effective way in which they are consulted by school leaders and teachers. For example, in the recent parental survey one parent commented that St John's is a '... fantastic supportive school. Staff go out of their way to help parents, and staff are very understanding and kind. [It is] a wonderfully friendly and loving environment.' During the inspection parents remarked that home, school and parish links have significantly strengthened since the last inspection and that they were particularly appreciative of the termly topic sheets sent home by the school for Religious Education. The school has strong links with the local parish. Leaders work collaboratively with the parish priest and invite him in on a regular basis. Pupils speak highly of the parish priest who makes a significant impact on the very strong spiritual and pastoral life of the school.

The Prayer Life of the School

Grade 1

The quality of personal and collective worship is outstanding. The Eucharist and prayer are central to the life of the school. The headteacher, Religious Education coordinators and parish priest work very hard together to provide high quality opportunities for prayer and collective worship for all pupils. They produce a comprehensive and well-planned programme of Masses, liturgies and assemblies which are linked to the liturgical calendar and the 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme. There is a variety of prayer styles which gives pupils opportunities to deepen their prayer lives. Pupils are actively involved as servers, musicians, readers and members of the choir in Masses and liturgical celebrations. For example, in an outstanding Key Stage 2 'Sing and Praise' assembly focusing on the theme of Lent, the headteacher and the music coordinator led pupils to worship and pray through uplifting singing, skilful questioning

and quiet reflection accompanied by gentle background music. The two leaders affirmed and encouraged pupils throughout the assembly, using Psalm 25 as a vehicle for pupils to reflect on God being there for us in times of trouble. Lenten images and verses from scripture on the electronic whiteboard enhanced the prayerful atmosphere. Pupils accompanied the guitar-playing music leader on flute and violin as the rest of those assembled sang hymns wholeheartedly in parts and in the round. The quality of their singing was outstanding. In an excellent Year 1 class liturgy, quiet reflection on the Easter story and the employment of questions such as 'What can we give to others that we can see?' juxtaposed with the question, 'What can we give to others that we cannot see or hold?' were followed by open questions which extended pupils' thinking. Further opportunities for prayer are offered throughout the day. Prayer or reflection form part of every Religious Education lesson. In all acts of worship observed, pupils were reverent, were focused on the theme and remained on task. Many excellent examples of personal prayers were seen in prayer boxes located in each classroom. High quality displays and focal areas in the classrooms and around the school reinforce the themes from the liturgical season and the 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme and proclaim the school as distinctively Catholic. Evidence of these could be seen in the Mission Statement display 'Unique in God's Eyes' which was located in the hall and in the eye-catching picture of Jesus which was the centrepiece of the attractive prayer table prominently positioned in the foyer. There is a strong link between the school and the parish where increasingly large numbers of pupils attend Mass on a regular basis. Pupils take part in Education Sunday in the local parish as servers, musicians and readers of the prayers of intercession. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. He makes a positive impact on the spiritual and pastoral life of staff, pupils and their families. As a result, the prayer life of the school acts as a catalyst to the pupils' spiritual and moral development which is outstanding.

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

Grade 1

The school is inclusive and reflects the powerful impact that the school's Vision and Mission Statement has on social cohesion. Diversity is celebrated and affirmed through events such as 'One World' week. This is an annual event where pupils, staff, parents, carers and other visitors take part in multi-cultural learning and activities to celebrate the food, costumes and traditions of the many cultures represented by the families who belong to the school community. Cans of food were collected during this week to support the local St Anne's centre for the homeless. The strong sense of community is instantly realised by visitors to the school. Pastoral care is outstanding. For example, during the inspection, parents spoke of the support given by the school to families in bereavement. A strength of the school is the support given to parents, such as workshops and a Family Link service funded by the school which supports the 'Stay Safe' outcome highlighted in the Every Child Matters agenda. The parents' association is very active in the school, raising funds for specific age groups and projects through cake sales, school fairs and other activities. For example, they contributed to some of the costs of the New Vision and Mission Statement launch in the Autumn term. The Religious Education curriculum contributes through the study of World Religions. This is enriched by the One World Week and visits to other places of worship such as the local Buddhist temple. Pupils are encouraged to use their talents in liturgies and through various clubs. They take a full and active part in the local community, the local Children's Parade where other schools also take part being such an example. Years 5 and 6 attended a Science day at an Independent Secondary school. The school is developing strong links with a local special school. For example, their students have attended some assemblies and are planning to lead some 'sing & sign' sessions in the future. The summer fair, lunch time clubs and other events are opportunities where both school communities come together. Let's Dance, Brighton and Hove Christmas Carol Concert in the Brighton Centre, Brighton and Hove Albion and Athletics are some of the outside school

activities in which a number of pupils have participated. The school is generous in its charitable giving, supporting good causes and charities both locally and further afield. These include the local Claire Walk shelter for senior citizens, where pupils take food parcels and sing Carols, the Cabrini children's society, Cafod and raising money for world disaster funds such as the recent appeal following flooding in the Philippines. This all leads to pupils understanding their calling as responsible citizens of this world and the part they play in the Church's call to work together for the common good. Parents are kept updated through informative newsletters which are published twice each month and are also posted on the school's new website. The Catholic life of the school features prominently in these documents. The overwhelming majority of parents have a very positive view of the school. In a recent survey one parent wrote, 'I love the way the school involves parents in everything they do and that everything is explained clearly to the children.'

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Grade 2

Given their starting points, pupils achieve high standards in Religious Education and their achievement compares favourably with English and in some cases even exceeds it. Work in their books is of a high quality and well presented. It indicates that pupils' progress is very good year on year and that they are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate. Very few learners underperform in the subject. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding as a consequence of high expectations and work which is suitably matched to pupils' abilities. Standards in the classroom are also good across the key stages, pupils work well together and the majority say they enjoy Religious Education. With well-targeted support, pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. Despite the different languages spoken in the home, many pupils are developing a good religious vocabulary.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education is good with some outstanding features. Pupils make very good progress and show good attitudes towards their work. Planning of lessons is meticulous and effective. Teachers work hard to provide activities which are both challenging and also match the abilities of the pupils in their care. In some lessons the opportunities for independent learning, for example, opportunities to raise their own questions or make decisions, would further enhance their learning experience. In most lessons there was evidence of open questioning skilfully applied to extend pupils' thinking. For example, in an outstanding lesson on 'Self Giving' in one of the Key Stage 2 classes, the teacher skilfully led pupils through a time of prayer and quiet reflection. She used the electronic whiteboard to recap their previous learning by employing Koder's watercolour of the Last Supper to elicit answers to questions 'How did we know it was Jesus?' and 'Why did Koder not paint his face?'. Pupils read sections from Mark's Gospel on the Way of the Cross, and the Crucifixion. Challenging group activities, based on this scripture passage, were matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils were encouraged to ask their own questions to discuss with the class later in the lesson. The teacher asked them to imagine they had witnessed the crucifixion and to express, amongst other things, how they felt. Writing their own choices for the main symbols and colours related to the story on adhesive note paper, they explained reasons for their choices. The activity finished with pupils producing

their own paintings of the crucifixion and empathising with the emotions of the disciples. The pace of the lesson was brisk and deep learning was evident in the responses of the pupils. Occasionally closed questioning was used in some lessons to test pupils' knowledge but teachers were mindful that this did not necessarily advance pupils' understanding or higher order thinking. Teaching assistants are very well informed and deployed. They play a significant part in ensuring that all pupils gain access to the curriculum. Consequently, those with special educational needs and those requiring extra support with learning English make good progress. There are no significant variations between gender groups. Parents are informed by the school of the Religious Education topics their children will encounter at the start of each term and are encouraged to support them in their learning.

Quality of the Curriculum

Grade 2

Interesting activities including role play, painting and empathetic writing using a Gospel source are strong components of the Religious Education curriculum offered by the school. The curriculum fulfils the requirements of The Bishop's Conference and Diocese. It provides opportunities for pupils to study other world religions and this positively impacts on pupils' understanding and respect for other communities. The school uses contributions from families of other religions to enhance pupils' understanding. Curriculum time allocated to Religious Education is 10% and provides a systematic study of God, the life and teachings of Jesus, the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold and the relationships between faith and life. The curriculum builds on the foundation laid at home. It is carefully coordinated with Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and the school's Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) programme, which are set in the context of Catholic teaching. Full advantage is taken of opportunities to develop pupils' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Interactive white boards are used in the classroom and the internet for video clips. Strong links are made with art, music, dance and literacy. Progression within and between year groups is very good. The inclusion of decision making could further enhance pupils' learning. In its self-evaluation the school has identified the regular canvassing of pupils' opinions and ideas on their own learning as a further area for development. Such events as Black History Month and the Harvest Celebration enable skills to be transferred across the curriculum and give a global dimension to Religious Education. Visits and visitors, such as the uncle of a pupil who works as a volunteer in Uganda and also a visiting speaker on disability awareness day, further enrich the curriculum and strongly support community cohesion by encouraging an understanding of diversity. As a result, the curriculum makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of the pupils in the school. Religious Education is well resourced because the school's leadership view it as a core subject. There is a good range of books and artefacts to support the teaching of Religious Education and that of other faiths.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Grade 2

The headteacher's vision for Religious Education has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Together with the Religious Education co-ordinators the drive for improvement in achievement and standards has enabled pupils to flourish. The co-ordinators work effectively as a team and have identified areas for improvement such as canvassing pupils' opinions and ideas for their learning and also pupil self-assessment within Assessment for Learning strategies. Peer assessment is developing well as is developmental

marking. The monitoring of plans and marking is progressing very well. Pupils will now require further opportunities and time to respond to teachers' questioning in their books. Religious Education leaders are aware of the greater need for consistency in teachers' marking and are supporting them in this area. Best practice of interactive marking needs to be shared and extended across the school. The school's planning provides INSET sessions for moderating work in the subject. This should have an additional impact on teacher confidence and consistency in assessing levels of attainment. The school has identified in its comprehensive review and self-evaluation that tracking of pupil progress is a priority to build upon the existing tracking structures that are already in place. The Religious Education link governor lends very effective support to the school's leaders and is aware of the priorities which have been identified. She is a regular visitor to the school and has attended acts of worship and celebrations held on-site. The school makes good use of Diocesan training and support. In fostering close links with local Catholic schools in the Deanery the school is committed to disseminating and sharing good practice. These close links with the Deanery schools provide an ideal platform for the school to secure greater consistency in the moderation of pupils' Religious Education work and could be considered as an area for further development.