



Diocese of Westminster

St Bernadette Catholic Primary School
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DFE Number: 919/3416
URN Number: 117489

Headteacher: Mrs E. Barton
Chair of Governors: Mr P. Bussandri

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 15th March 2012
Date of previous inspection: November 2009

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M. Betts

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent 1 day in school, visited 4 lessons and 2 assemblies, and carried out 4 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons, examination of school documents, and attendance at religious services where possible.

The Inspection of St Bernadette Catholic Primary School, London Colney was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self evaluation.

Description of School

The school is a one form entry in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of St Alban's deanery. The school serves the parish of St Mary of Walsingham, London Colney. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 84%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 12% and from other Faiths 4%.

There are 228 pupils on roll, with 1 pupil with a Statement of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is slightly above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is slightly above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.

Key for inspection grades.

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Satisfactory;
Grade 4: Inadequate.

A. Curriculum Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

How well does the content of curriculum religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade [1]

The Curriculum Directory is used to very good effect during medium term religious education planning and teachers record which part of each strand they intend to cover. Lesson planning adapts very well to the pupils' needs. For example in one lesson the work was linked to 2 strands of the Directory when pupils learnt about Jesus washing the disciples' feet and then writing their own ideas of service to others.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade [1]

All pupils are gaining an understanding of the life and teaching of the Catholic Church at a very good rate and display a growing depth of thought and scripture knowledge. This was evidenced during the older pupils' discussions about reasons to give service to others. Pupils are encouraged to apply learning to their daily lives. The standard gained in religious education is high and slightly above English in both key stages. Assessment of pupils is linked to the national Levels of Attainment. The books are very well presented and evidence a full coverage of the curriculum with a very good range of written activities.

The quality of teaching

Grade [1]

Teaching is very good overall and many outstanding aspects were observed. As a result most pupils make very good progress. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, link teaching well with Scripture and plan thoroughly. Teaching uses visual presentation, talk partners and open questioning effectively to engage the interest of the pupils. More able pupils are encouraged to develop as independent learners by being challenged to give individual responses. Teachers effectively include the spiritual aspects of religious education into their lessons for example one class meditated on following Jesus' footsteps. Marking of work is thorough giving appropriate praise with suggestions to encourage further improvements to which pupils respond. Homework contributes very well to pupils' learning.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade [1]

The leadership of religious education (RE) is very good and well supported by the school's senior leadership. Religious education has a very high profile in the school evidenced by the degree of training given. The religious education subject leader guides and supports staff very well especially non-Catholic teachers. Frequent monitoring by the leadership and the RE governor ensures that the school's self-evaluation is accurate and leads to future targets within the School Development Plan. Two teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS).

What has improved in curriculum religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in curriculum religious education?

All improvement actions from the last inspection have been achieved. New resources for other faith teaching have been purchased.

To further improve in curriculum religious education the school should:

Set religious education targets so that pupils know their current level of achievement and what they should do to achieve a higher level.

Continue to develop religious education assessment to ensure consistency of judgements by moderating internally and externally and creating a portfolio of moderated work

What is the overall effectiveness of curriculum religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade: [1]

The school views itself as very good and the inspector concurs with this judgement. Pupils are gaining religious literacy at a very good rate. The standards achieved are high. Pupils are becoming more aware of how faith affects daily living. One pupil explained "Religious education guides you in life". Pupils enjoy religious education especially investigating Scripture, writing related prayers and when outcomes are practical. Staff are committed to the high profile given to religious education and have high expectations of the standards they wish pupils to achieve.

B. The school as a Catholic Community

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum - time, resources, budget

Grade [1]

Religious education is very important in the school evidenced by the subject receiving at least 10% of curriculum time and by the many high quality religious education displays. For example, all classes have produced thought provoking displays relating to peace. The budget given to religious education is in line with that allocated to the other core subjects. Governors are very aware of its importance and have undertaken Catholic school governor training. The leadership team are instrumental in reviewing the quality of religious education and are actively involved in its development.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community.

Grade [1]

Worship and prayer are integral parts of each school day. A variety of different spiritual opportunities are effectively provided such as during Rosary club and religious education lessons when pupils reflect on the theme using music and artefacts to inspire their thoughts. Pupils enjoy writing prayers and use them within worship. Worship and liturgies are enriched by visual presentations and high quality singing. Key events in the Church year are celebrated with a liturgy or Mass with contributions by the pupils. Parents are invited. Until the new parish priest is in post, the school has invited a priest from a neighbouring parish to lead the sacramental services and the religious education “Rejoice” celebrations. Prayer and worship have a very strong impact on pupils’ spiritual and moral development. Pupils are very respectful during prayer and participate with sincerity. They appreciate the reflection opportunities given to apply the theme to their own lives. This was evidenced by pupils’ depth of thought based on possible service they could give during Lent.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.

Grade[1]

Pupils are proud of their school and enthusiastically undertake responsibilities such as buddies to younger children and as peer mentors. They appreciate their ideas and opinions being sought for example through the School Council. Teaching about other faiths has a positive effect on pupils’ understanding of beliefs within the local community. Pupils are very aware of the importance of service to others and one explained “Jesus wants us to be friends with everyone”. The pupils understand they are living out their Catholic duty by organising fund-raising for local, national and international charities. Pupils welcome the local elderly into school for special events and Harvest gifts are distributed to local needy. Relationships are very good and reflect Christian care and concern for others. The pastoral support offered to pupils is very good. The school is a welcoming, inclusive community where all members are valued and individual talents are recognised, celebrated and promoted.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf; **Grade [1]**

The school has very good links with parents who appreciate the approachability of staff. The school has effective links with the parish and looks forward to welcoming the new priest. It has close links with other Catholic schools. The school works in partnership with the diocese through accessing their training and their guidance when needed. Pupils attend diocesan and deanery events and services.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Grade [1]

The school leadership, including governors, are fully committed to the Church's mission in education. They have a clear vision and engage all staff in implementing and developing the school's Catholic ethos. Pupils and parents are aware of the mission statement which underpins the school life. The leadership understands very well the school's strengths and development needs through their thorough and accurate self-evaluation. Governors fulfil very well their responsibilities and are pro-active. They are eager to promote local Catholic Secondary education. One performance management target for each teacher is linked to the school's Catholic life. The school's capacity to improve further is very good.

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school ?

Since last inspection a substantive headteacher has been appointed. A reflective prayer garden has been established. Parents are invited to become more involved in school life.

To further develop the school's Catholic life the school should:

Engage pupils more in the planning of class worship.

Forge a strong relationship with the new parish priest.

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade: [1]

The school views itself as very good and the inspector concurs with this judgement. The committed leadership of the headteacher and governors is instrumental in effectively maintaining and developing the Catholic identity. Prayer and worship have a strong central role. The pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good and this is reflected in their very good behaviour and positive attitudes. Commitment to self-sacrifice and service to others is being promoted at this present time of Lent. Pupils' various responses to this indicate their growing awareness of their Catholic faith commitment.