



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

Holy Rood Catholic Primary School

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D/Æ Number: 919 3985

Headteacher: Ms. Evelyn Ward

Chair of Governors: Mrs. Jackie Elliott

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: 6th. July 2011

Date of previous inspection: 25th. April 2008

Reporting Inspector: Sister Mary Jo Martin RSHM

Description of School

Holy Rood Catholic Primary School is a two form entry school in Watford and serves the parishes of Holy Rood and St. Helen's. The school was created in 2006 from the amalgamation of the previous infant and junior schools. New buildings have just recently been opened. Pupils in the school are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds, some of whose families are experiencing unemployment. Pupils are largely from a white British background, but a number of children are of Irish, Italian, Filipino and Polish backgrounds. There are currently 458 pupils on roll, 92% of them baptised Catholics. 3 pupils hold a statement of special educational need and 75 pupils are on the SEN register. There are 17 full time and 4 part time teachers in the school 12 of whom are Catholic. 3 teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS). The school holds a number of awards, including Investors in People and Healthy Schools accreditation. The coming together of two school communities into one, the strong and vibrant partnership between home, school and parishes and the recent blessing of the new buildings symbolise all that is distinctive about Holy Rood Catholic Primary School: a growing, developing educational community built on strong Catholic vision and values.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Holy Rood is outstanding in its understanding and implementation of what makes Catholic education distinctive. Underpinning everything that happens in this school is a theology of Catholic education which places religious education at its heart. Everything derives from this theology and the school exemplifies an education that is Catholic in all its aspects, its experiences and the opportunities offered to its pupils. In discussion with the School Council about one thing that is special about Holy Rood, a year 6 pupil said: 'The Mission Statement is absolutely right, that is what happens in our school'. Parents expressed confidence and appreciation for the quality of care for their children, the individual support they have received and the comment 'my child is known and valued' was voiced by a number. The school is rooted in its Catholic faith; it prepares, supports and develops all staff to work collaboratively for the good of pupils; it has high expectations for its pupils, with knowledge and understanding of the particular difficulties facing parents in challenging circumstances and, it not only believes in partnership between home, school and parishes, but actively seeks to develop that.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

This is outstanding in both the areas identified at the last inspection. The scripture garden and the prayer room add additional rich opportunities for pupils' spiritual and religious development.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school's high quality self-evaluation enables it to identify and address any aspects for its further development. The school has robust systems in place to monitor, track and analyse its

work. The vision, commitment and professionalism of the leadership team are well placed to implement change. The school's self evaluation is an example of sound self-awareness, critical analysis and openness to moving forward. The school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue with the school's on-going review of the new Religious Education Programme: 'The Way, the Truth and The Life' to ensure it meets pupils' religious literacy needs and high teacher expectation.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, is outstanding. Their shared vision and understanding of Catholic education permeates all areas, aspects and dimensions of school life. There is no separation between the secular and the sacred in Holy Rood. The head's holistic understanding of the Catholicity of the education offered, is both inspirational and dynamic. Governors, and in particular the religious education link governor, the two parish priests and their assistants, as well as the strong parent association, work in close partnership and collaboration with the head to move the school forward. Staff are highly motivated, aspirational in their professionalism and committed to the vision of Catholic education at Holy Rood.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and very much a natural part of each day. There are many opportunities during the school day for pupils to engage in prayer, in class, at assembly, through liturgies or quietly in the prayer room and scripture garden. Sacred spaces in every class highlight the liturgical year and displays around the school focus pupils' attention on key aspects for their reflection. The celebration of the Eucharist is celebrated regularly and pupils also have the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation at key moments throughout the school year. The prayer room provides a quiet, inviting and beautifully arranged environment for prayer. Located in a place that pupils regularly pass, the door is always open, welcoming pupils to enter or reminding them, as they pass, of the importance of prayer and sacred places in their school. Pupils take the lead in class acts of worship and assemblies. In the assembly observed, pupils were attentive, articulate and confident in their participation and very comfortable in the silence that was offered for private reflection. The quality of the opportunities for worship and liturgy is outstanding and there was evidence in what was observed throughout the day, of the centrality and acceptance of the importance of prayer in the life of the school.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school /college promote community cohesion?

Opportunities abound for pupils to engage in local, national and global experiences. Some of these activities and experiences help them as individuals to grow in their awareness of themselves, their abilities and their development. Carol singing at Christmas; visiting residential homes for the elderly, participating in a dance festival and 'operation Christmas child'. Other activities challenge pupils to engage with the less fortunate, through the project to support the community in Rwanda in building houses for orphaned children; through involvement in fund raising for global disasters; through Advent and Lent fundraising campaigns. Celebrating the various cultures in school, local community and wider community, has raised pupils' awareness and understanding of the richness of different cultures. Valuing differences is a constant theme and the School Council spoke eloquently of the ways in which pupil mediators help other pupils to develop this value. The underlying principles behind all the opportunities offered to pupils are the vision of the 4 'Rs' of Respect, Respond, Reflect and Resilience'. Pupils are able to articulate the importance of these values and attributes and were able to explain how and in what ways they impacted on them in school and in general. There are excellent relationships throughout the school at every level. The school does not rest on its laurels and has already identified its areas for development in the next year, all of which are based on the Church's call to social justice and value and respect for each person.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are above average. Pupils make excellent progress. A new system of target setting, pupil self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment enable pupils to make excellent progress and develop their ability as independent learners. Pupils are knowledgeable, articulate and confident and show good understanding when engaged in lessons. Key vocabulary is well promoted in all classes, providing pupils with excellent opportunities to develop their writing. Vulnerable groups of learners have been identified in all classes; strategies for the gifted and talented are operating effectively and systems are in place to closely identify and monitor individual pupil progress.

Grade 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching, overall, is outstanding. Teachers display an excellent confidence in the delivery of religious education. Planning is detailed and well developed and the subject leader offers excellent support to staff. Only 3 staff hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, so the role of the subject leader has been crucial and is, in fact, exceptional in the provision of support and resources to teachers. Teacher expectation is high and pupils with particular needs as well as those who are under achieving, have additional support and differentiated work. The teaching assistants observed in class were very well prepared and extremely confident in the support they offered pupils. They felt valued and supported and respected by pupils. Teachers show great creativity in religious education lessons, with a reception class totally engaged in learning about the different roles in Church through role playing the work of priests, altar servers, cleaners, office managers and flower arrangers. During a 2nd year lesson on St Peter's

escape from prison, pupils witnessed and entered into discussion with a teacher playing the part of St. Peter. Pupils were totally caught up in the drama and easily engaged with the narrative, its meaning and implications for the early followers of Jesus. Teachers' questioning is open and challenging and develops pupils' thinking skills. The lessons observed were well linked to the Attainment Levels. Marking is very good, consistent and regular with formative comments. There is very good and regular use of ICT.

Grade 1

Quality of the Curriculum

The importance of religious education is evident throughout the school. Not only does the school fulfil its Diocesan requirements in terms of time allocation, it understands the importance of religious education's contribution and importance to and in all areas of the curriculum. In a year 3 class, the religious education lesson flowed into the literacy lesson with a natural rhythm and familiarity of practice. Religious education frequently leads into other aspects of study. The new religious education programme is being embedded with excellent support and monitoring. Focused times for learning about world faiths are offered each year and key moments in the school year celebrate and draw attention to the festivals of world faiths. Resources are excellent and the financial allocation is generously in line with other core subjects.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The quality of the leadership and management of religious education is quite outstanding. The subject leader has a tremendous grasp of her subject, exceptional vision and focus on what staff need in order to enable them to deliver quality religious education. The planning, monitoring and development of materials for lesson observations and assessment are exemplary. The subject leader is exceptionally well supported by the head and the link governor for religious education, as well as the priests who regularly visit the classes. The preparation and planning of any celebrations of liturgy are extremely good. The shared theological and philosophical vision of the head and her deputy, influences the entire approach to education in Holy Rood. Religious education is the core of the whole curriculum.

Grade 1