



**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT**
(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

School: St. Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

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School URN: 130815

Headteacher: Mr A Norton

Chair of Governors: Mrs G Smith

Inspectors: Mrs M Hirst
Mrs J Monaghan

Date of Inspection: 25 June 2013

INTRODUCTION

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law and Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in accordance with the Diocese of Nottingham Schedule for Section 48 Inspections. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 6 Religious Education lessons and 1 Act of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher who is also the subject leader for Religious Education, 2 governors and parents. Discussions were also held with pupils.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF), planning documents, assessment and tracking data, Collective Worship folder, the previous inspection report, some monitoring documentation from the headteacher and governors. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, part of the North Lincolnshire Catholic Academy Trust is a smaller than average sized primary school situated in the town of Brigg, there are 183 pupils on roll with 59 baptised Catholic children (32%). 50% of pupils are from other Christian denominations and 6% are from other world faiths. The remaining pupils have no religious affiliation thus St. Mary's is attended by children from a diverse range of backgrounds and beliefs.

The school converted to academy status in April 2012.

The parishes of St. Mary's Brigg, St. Augustine Webster, Barton upon Humber and St. Thomas More, Caistor are served by the school.

The percentage of children entitled to Free School Meals is 3%, this represents 6 children and 21 children are on the school's special educational needs record, (representing 11 of the school total).

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

2

CATHOLIC LIFE

2

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

3

KEY FINDINGS

- St. Mary's is a good Catholic school overall. The school is a welcoming and inclusive community which upholds the precepts of the common good. Some priorities since the last inspection have been met though further development is required in some areas.
- The Catholic Life of the school is good. School leaders and staff are committed to developing the school's Catholic mission and ethos. Staff are good role models, they are proud of their school. Key strengths of the school are the good relationships which exist between home, school and parishes. Parents participate fully in school life and they have a high opinion of the school community. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.
- The quality of Collective Worship in the school is good. Pupils are beginning to plan and lead worship and staff are creating opportunities for them to do this. The liturgical formation of the staff is one area of priority which has been recognised by school leaders.
- The quality of Religious Education in the school requires improvement. Teaching and assessment in Religious Education are not consistently good throughout the school.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school, Collective Worship and Religious Education need to be as rigorous as in other core subjects.
 - Develop curriculum delivery in Religious Education and monitor classroom practice in a phased programme of regular classroom observation, work scrutiny and pupil interviews.
 - Increase the level of challenge for all pupils in Religious Education so that a higher proportion of pupils make better than expected progress.
 - Continue to develop an assessment portfolio in Religious Education as a
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working document and point of reference for staff so that there is greater consistency in the assessment of pupils' work in Religious Education.

- Strengthen a systematic analysis of the tracking of pupils' assessment data in Religious Education to ensure that all groups are making at least good levels of progress.
- Develop an understanding of the use of 'driver words' to further develop the levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in Religious Education.
- Create opportunities for other teaching staff to take on the role of subject leader in Religious Education.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and benefit greatly from it. The strong Catholic ethos enables them to participate in shaping activities with a religious character both in the school and the wider community. An example of this is that a governor, who is also a parishioner and the parish priest, leads the 'Little St. Cecilia's Choir' which sings at the parish and at local events. The school's mission statement is valued and understood by pupils, they can say how the school is helping them to become better people. They are regularly involved in parish and diocesan celebrations and activities, they appreciate and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish and the wider community. Pupils know about key celebrations in school throughout the liturgical year. All pupils have a strong sense of identity with St. Mary's and feel welcomed, valued and fully part of the school community. Parents and pupils think very highly of the school. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, they listen carefully to each other and are considerate towards others. There is a great sense of family and community in all aspects of school life. Pupils feel safe in school and know that there is someone they can talk to. All pupils, whatever their background or circumstances, feel that they belong to St. Mary's and that they are loved and cared for.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good. It is given a high priority and is reflected in the school's mission statement. The headteacher and staff ensure that opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development are frequent and that they impact well on pupils. The displays, religious artefacts, icons, focus areas in each classroom and the prayer garden ensure that the school's Catholic character is well reflected in the learning environment. Pupils learn about Education in Personal Relationships through the 'In the Beginning' programme. All staff are good role models, they are proud of their school. Good relationships exist between home, school and parishes. There are many opportunities for parents and parishioners to participate fully in school life and they have a high opinion of the school community. The parish priest is a regular visitor to St. Mary's. He celebrates Mass at the school, attends other liturgies, explains the Mass to the pupils and leads a lunchtime prayer group with a parent.

The leadership and management of the Catholic Life of the school is good. The governors, headteacher and the senior leadership team successfully promote a welcoming and caring ethos, which reflects Gospel values and the mission statement of the school. The Catholic Life of the school is given a high priority and Catholic values and principles are promoted very well. The good leadership of the Catholic Life of the school ensures that all pupils are well cared for and nurtured in this happy, caring, safe and supportive environment in which high expectations of behaviour are communicated to all pupils. The governing body has formed a Spiritual Development Committee and members have attended diocesan and local training. Governors are becoming more confident in monitoring the Catholic Life of the school in several ways including conducting pupil interviews and reporting findings back to the governing body. Leaders now need to embed this good practice to monitor and evaluate this area of school life more regularly and with an even greater amount of rigour.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

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- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

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- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is good. Prayer is integral to the everyday life of the school. Pupils are keen to participate and are at ease when praying with their school community as seen in the whole school Act of Worship, the meditation at the beginning of a Year 6 lesson and in an Act of Worship observed in the Reception class. All pupils from the youngest in Reception class to pupils in Year 6, sing enthusiastically and join in prayers with confidence. Pupils know traditional prayers and can write and say informal prayers as seen in the classrooms and in the prayer garden. They are beginning to be more involved in leading, planning and preparing Collective Worship. Pupils understand that there are different forms of liturgies and have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year. There is a calm and peaceful ethos throughout the school which is reflected in the pupils' outstanding behaviour and consideration for others.

The provision for Collective Worship is good and is given a high profile throughout the school. There is a planned programme of Masses, liturgies, acts of worship and other liturgical celebrations which are appropriately matched to the pupils' stages of development and which enable parents, governors and the parish community to join the pupils in worship and prayer. Pupils are given many opportunities to participate in a range of Acts of Worship including a lunchtime prayer group. There is a focus area in each classroom with resources that impact on the quality of prayer and provide pupils with stimulus for thought and reflection. The school is now at a stage of seeking ways by which it can make more use of the children's own initiatives in planning, producing and leading prayer and worship independently and consistently.

Monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship carried out by senior leaders is good overall. They have a deeply rooted understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons, rites and symbols and a range of artefacts to effectively deepen pupils' appreciation, knowledge and understanding. Leaders have rightly identified the further liturgical formation of staff as an area for further development. The school works with the parish to ensure that pupils receive good sacramental preparation. This is led by a governor of the school and ensures that good links are developed further between the school and parish. The subject leader and governors have begun to develop several monitoring activities together, including pupil interviews. These are now beginning to be reported back to the Spirituality Committee and the full governing body.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

3

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers (including governors) monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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By the end of Year 6, standards in Religious Education are good overall. Throughout the school, pupils work steadily with the younger pupils and those in upper Key Stage 2 showing interest and enthusiasm for their work in Religious Education. The majority of pupils' progress in Religious Education is in line with diocesan expectations with some pupils exceeding these. However, even greater progress could be achieved when an overall consistency of approach is afforded to all Religious Education lessons. Pupils are encouraged to develop a range of theological skills though more higher-order and differentiated questioning by teachers with them probing pupils' responses would raise pupils' levels of knowledge and understanding further. There was some evidence of this in some of the lessons observed though this would be further strengthened with greater consistency across the school. In Key Stage 2, pupils are beginning to show an awareness of thinking spiritually, theologically and ethically. This becomes more evident as they approach upper Key Stage 2. Here, pupils demonstrated sophisticated knowledge, skills and understanding of 'pilgrimage' and its significance to Christians. Pupils also demonstrated an understanding of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. They knew about young adult helpers in Lourdes and commented that they would like to do this themselves at some time in the future. Vulnerable pupil groups, particularly those in early years, show enthusiasm and joy in all that Religious Education lessons offer, they join in and make progress.

The quality of teaching observed ranged from requiring improvement to good with pockets of outstanding. The majority of planning for Religious Education indicates that the same tasks are set for all pupils with very little differentiation. Where teaching was good or outstanding, tasks provided challenge for all groups with extension activities planned for the more able pupils. Lesson planning therefore needs to focus on current assessment of pupils' knowledge so that tasks extend learning for all. Teachers need to ensure that all children respond to questions during the exposition. There was sometimes an over-reliance on the same pupils answering regularly with the majority of the class sitting passively. In some instances, the pace of learning is good and pupils are engaged, however there are also examples of pupils not understanding the tasks set and with some completing them too easily without the opportunity of extension or more challenging work. Thus, the pace of learning throughout the school is uneven. Effective strategies of home-school partnership were evidenced in the early years where pupils share work they have completed at home with their teacher and peers. Pupils were very proud and almost 'glowed' in the praise given to them by the teacher for their contributions. Where teaching was good, resources were used effectively but could have been enhanced further by more imaginative use of ICT. In some cases, the marking of pupils' work in Religious Education needs to be more regular and incisive. There were some examples of good practice but many instances where a tick or just 'good' was the only comment. Marking in Religious

Education should be given the same rigour and importance as in other core subjects with affirmation of good work and improvement points made to develop learning for all pupils. The extent to which pupils are involved in assessing and discussing their learning is limited and needs to be developed further.

There is evidence of some monitoring and evaluation by the school's leadership of provision and pupils' progress in Religious Education, however this is not embedded sufficiently to provide accurate and robust self-evaluation judgements for Religious Education. The school's leadership is aware of current developments in Religious Education though these are not fully incorporated into practice. The school has plans and vision for improving lesson delivery and provision, these need regular monitoring to ensure sustained improvement. All those involved in teaching Religious Education are committed to its importance but there are discrepancies in articulating their shared vision for the subject. The Religious Education curriculum would benefit from greater consistency. Where effective, it meets the needs and interests of pupils with success. Planning, preparation, assessment, monitoring and evaluation all need to be as robust as in other core subjects. The Headteacher, in his role as subject leader for Religious Education recognises this and there are plans to ensure that this happens. Some improvement points from the last diocesan inspection are still at the 'development' stage and must be addressed with immediate effect. This would then promote the continued growth and development of Religious Education in the school.

WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

Grade 1	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
Grade 2	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, there are aspects that require improvement.
Grade 4	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy. The school will receive a monitoring visit within twelve months.

