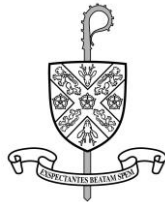


DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

Inspection of Religious Education
Collective Worship
and
The Catholic Life of the School



School: St. Gerard's RC Primary School

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Headteacher: Mr Ian Walker

Chair: Mr Gamini Wijesinghe

Date: 4th/5th March 2015

Inspector: Mrs Jenny Firth

Date & Grade of Last Inspection: 28 June 2010 **Grade:** 2

Overall Grade for this Inspection: 2

A Report from:
The Diocese of Middlesbrough Schools' Service
Section 48 Inspection Team
50a The Avenue
Linthorpe
Middlesbrough TS5 6QT

INTRODUCTION

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Bishop of Middlesbrough (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school. The Inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation. The Inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

What Inspection Grades mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding Catholic school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a Catholic school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	These features, though of adequate quality, require improvement to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate Catholic school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:

St. Gerard's is a smaller than average sized primary school. Almost all of the pupils are of White British backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported through school action and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below that usually found. Currently, there is a much higher than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. The provision in the early years Nursery is part time, and the school provides a breakfast and after school club each day. St Gerard's forms part of the Trinity Partnership, a group of Middlesbrough primary and secondary Roman Catholic schools. Currently there are 183 pupils on roll, of whom 46% are baptised Roman Catholic. The percentage of teachers who are Roman Catholic is 67%

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION:

- The inspector observed 8 lessons
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body including the chair of the governing body, the governor with responsibility for Chaplaincy and the governor responsible for Religious Education (RE)
- The inspector held a meeting with the RE co-ordinator and the headteacher
- A meetings was also held with the Parish Priest
- The inspector attended a whole school assembly and Collective Acts of Worship in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1
- The inspector met with a group of parents at the beginning of the day and also with a group of parents who requested a meeting with the inspector
- A sample of parent questionnaires was examined
- Further discussions with pupils took place at lunch time
- The inspector observed the school's work, pupils' written work, displays and sacred spaces in classrooms
- The inspector also scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school including the school's planning for improvement documents, monitoring information, previous inspection reports, information about pupil's progress and tracking information, and information about the school's self evaluation
- Information from governors meetings was also examined
- The inspector also took account of a range of other information celebrating the success of the school in the local community

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 183

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 30

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 46%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian Denominations: 15%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 0%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 37%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 11%

Teaching Staff:

Full-time Teachers: 9

Part-time Teachers: 0

Percentage of Catholic Teachers: 67%

Support Staff:

Part-time Classroom Support Staff: 3

Full-time Classroom Support Staff: 6

Percentage of Catholic Classroom Support Staff: 37%

Percentage of learning time given to R.E: 10%

Parishes served by the School:

St. Mary's Cathedral

1. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

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MAIN FINDINGS

St. Gerard's is a good Catholic school that values its Catholic identity and sense of community. There are, however, important aspects of the school's provision which require improvement.

Leaders and managers are instrumental in maintaining the good Catholic ethos that pervades school life. Relationships are strong and reflect Christian values. Pupils are able to contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school and understand the responsibilities and demands that this involves. Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. Collective Worship is well planned, resourced and responsive to the needs of the community and the Church's liturgical year. Older pupils plan and lead their own liturgies and younger pupils are developing this skill well. Pupils enjoy and participate in liturgies with reverence and respect. Pupils enjoy coming to school, have positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good. There are good links with parents, the parish and the wider community. Standards and progress in Religious Education require improvement as there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching resulting in progress that is variable across the school. Self evaluation is not rigorous enough to make use of data collected and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Tracking systems have been set up and staff are becoming more confident in using the Levels of Attainment in Religious Education. Assessment for learning is not consistently used to ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what steps are needed to improve their work. Governors are highly committed to their role and are regular visitors to the school.

What the school needs to do to improve further:

Improve the quality of teaching in Religious Education to ensure that all teaching is at least good by:

- Developing effective assessment for learning strategies in order for pupils to know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work
- Strengthening still further teachers' confidence in using the Levels of Attainment in Religious Education so that pupils are accurately assessed and this information is used to plan challenging, differentiated activities which consistently build on and extend pupils' learning
- Ensuring assessment data is closely tracked, analysed and monitored to enable pupils to reach their potential

Implement a rigorous process of self-evaluation to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Catholic Education by:

- Developing a system of monitoring and evaluation that drives through improvements in an effective and timely manner
- Ensuring monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and sets clear targets for improvement
- Ensuring that governors continue to receive information that is analytical and detailed enough to enable them to have an accurate view of the school's performance

2. PUPILS

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How good outcomes are for pupils, taking into account of variations between groups.

Pupils make a good contribution towards shaping the school's Catholic mission through their attitudes, behaviour and care for one another. They have a good appreciation of the responsibilities they are involved in as part of the school community, including their role as school buddies, school councillors and fundraisers. They are conscious of the needs of those beyond the school and have a strong sense of justice and concern for others. They actively support charities locally and globally such as CAFOD, the CAUSE Hamper campaign, My Mission and the Holy Name Orphanage in Bethlehem. Children are in the process of becoming Mini-Vinnies in order to be more active in creating fair trade. Adults within the school have high expectations of moral and ethical behaviour; these are communicated to pupils through the "statements to live by" which are displayed around the school. Pupils know they are well cared for and feel secure and confident, value their teachers and support staff who they see as good role models. They recognise the importance of key celebrations in the liturgical year and are involved in parish and diocesan activities such as leading Stations of the Cross, the Mass of Chrism, Lent soup kitchen and the Little Big Assembly.

Pupils enjoy Religious Education lessons. They concentrate well and behaviour for learning is good. Disruptions to lessons are rare. Pupils are keen to do well and apply themselves diligently to their work. However, the presentation of their work in books does not always accurately reflect the quality of the work they do. From a low baseline when they join the Nursery, pupils get off to a good start. However this rate of progress slows and is too variable as pupils move through the school, although there is evidence of good progress being made in some classes. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils reach levels of attainment in Religious Education that are broadly average. Progress towards expected levels is not consistently monitored to ensure that all pupils through the school make expected progress year on year. A more analytical approach to pupils' progress is beginning to show that gaps are beginning to close, however this needs to be embedded further. There are no notable differences between groups. With these inconsistencies in the quality of learning in all Key Stages, progress in Religious Education requires improvement.

St. Gerard's is a prayerful community where pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship are good. Pupils have a secure grasp of what worship is about and are at ease when praying with their school community in small and large gatherings. Older pupils take part in leading and preparing prayers and liturgy with enthusiasm and increasing confidence. Younger pupils are developing this skill well. They know what constitutes the various elements of worship. They have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical celebrations. A wide variety of the forms of prayer including traditional prayers are modelled well and pupils use their knowledge of scripture, religious artefacts and music to make appropriate choices when planning worship. Pupils participate in school and parish linked sacramental preparation, attend retreats and enjoy attending the Chaplaincy group. Traditions such as the Rosary, and the Stations of the Cross are very much part of the school year and families are becoming more involved in their child's religious development through activities such as "The Travelling Crib," and "The Lenten Cross." Collective Worship contributes positively to the spiritual, moral and personal development of all pupils.

• The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	2
• How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	3
• How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2

3. PROVISION

2

How effective the provision is for Catholic education

The quality of teaching is inconsistent in all Key Stages and requires improvement. These inconsistencies have not been addressed by the school leadership team with sufficient rigour to ensure that enough teaching is good. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods with varying degrees of success. Where teaching is good, questions are used well to probe pupils' understanding and challenge them further. Success criteria are shared, making the expected outcomes clear to the pupils who are enthusiastic about their work and make good progress in lessons. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to scaffold learning and focus children on the tasks set. Where teaching is less than good, the pace of learning is too slow, work set is not matched well enough to pupils' ability to ensure they reach their potential and there is no account taken of previous learning. At its best, marking and feedback provide opportunities for pupils to respond and identify the next steps in their learning. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across all year groups. Pupils in the Nursery enjoyed sharing their work about "Gathering" within the parish family. In a Key Stage 1 class, pupils enjoyed taking part in a role play activity looking at the signs, symbols, and different words used in Eucharist to give thanks. Pupils in Upper Key Stage 2 shared their ideas to plan a liturgy following their work on "Unity" when they looked at how the Eucharist helps people to live in communion.

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference 10% curriculum time using the "Come and See" programme for Religious Education. Children have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities through drama, role play and music. The school is well resourced to meet the requirements of delivering other faiths. Every effort is made to enable pupils to gain first-hand experience of the liturgical life of the Catholic Church. Parents and carers are kept fully informed about the Religious Education programme. They receive regular information about the topics to be studied and also suggestions for activities that could take place at home. However, the curriculum is not always matched well enough to the needs of all pupils, especially the more able.

The quality of Collective Worship is good and ensures that the spiritual needs of pupils are met well. Prayer is central to the life of the school, and forms part of pupils' daily life at school. Parents, parishioners and governors are invited to share the spiritual life of the school and regularly attend Masses, school liturgies and celebrations. Children are enthusiastic about the new "Prayer Garden" which in time, will provide a peaceful area for all to pray together and develop their spirituality. Attractive sacred spaces in all classrooms provide opportunities for pupils to pray and reflect together. Collective Worship is having a positive effect on the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The school reaches out to the needs of the wider community, providing opportunities for parents, parishioners and friends of the school to attend Mass, school liturgies and celebrations.

The quality of the provision for the Catholic life of the school is good. It is given a high priority as reflected in the Mission Statement which is clearly evident around the school and lived out by all the school community. There is a strong sense of family and community in all aspects of the life of the school which is evident in the quality of the relationships that exists between all stakeholders. The quality of relationships that exist between staff and pupils is good. Behaviour is good and rooted in gospel

values. Attractive displays, a range of artefacts and the creation of sacred spaces ensure the school's Catholic character is well reflected in the learning environment.

• The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	3
• The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	3
• The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2
• The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school	2

4. LEADERS, MANAGERS AND GOVERNORS

2

How effective leaders, managers and governors are in developing the Catholic life of the school

The Catholic life of the school is given a high priority by leaders, managers and governors. Catholic values and principles are promoted well. There is a deep commitment to the church's mission in education and personal development and high quality care are paramount. Leaders, managers and governors are good role models and ensure that opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development are frequent and these have an impact. Parents are supportive of the school and have a good understanding of the school's mission. They regularly receive "The Wednesday Word" which ensures that the Gospel message is shared. The Parish Priest is a regular visitor to the school and his presence is highly valued by all members of the school community. Governors visit the school regularly and are deeply committed to promoting its spiritual and religious life. They play a significant role towards monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school. Governors receive regular information about the spiritual life of the school. There are opportunities for all staff to attend training and observe good practice in other schools. Effective support is provided for non-Catholic teachers to support their spiritual and liturgical development.

Monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education requires improvement. School improvement planning is in place and identifies areas for improvement but there is a lack of strategic planning to ensure that issues are dealt with in a timely fashion. Leaders and managers acknowledge and accept that there are areas for improvement. However, action points are not always acted upon and monitored with the necessary urgency to bring about effective change. Monitoring activities include lesson observations, learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. However these activities often lack depth and rigour. Moderation of pupils' work also takes place and staff are becoming more confident with assessing pupils' work. Assessment and tracking systems are in place, but they are at an early stage of development. Governors are committed to driving improvement and have high expectations. They have not always received information that has been in sufficient detail to ensure they have a clear understanding of how well the school is performing. There now needs to be a clear drive to implement robust action planning to promote a whole school approach to the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well leaders, managers and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school, including collective worship, and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils	3