

DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

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



School: St Gerard's R.C. Primary School

Address: Avalon Court
Hemlington
Middlesbrough
TS8 9HU

URN: 111706

Email address: stgerardsrcprimary@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Headteacher: Mr Ian Walker

Chair: Mr Gamini Wijesinghe

Date: 28th/29th June 2010

Inspector: Mr Anthony Hay

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	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory Catholic school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

© 2009 copyright – Diocese of Middlesbrough. This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated. Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Gerard's R.C. Primary School is a smaller than average size Voluntary Aided (3 to 11) Primary School that serves a mixed intake of mainly White British pupils on the outskirts of Middlesbrough. The number of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The number of pupils with Special Educational Needs is below the national average. There are 151 pupils on roll and this is steadily increasing. The percentage of baptised Catholic pupils is 46%. Pupils are taught in 6 mainly year group based classes, only one class having pupils from two year groups. There is also a 26 place Nursery. Since the last inspection the school has gained Healthy School status, the Eco Schools Award, Artsmark Gold, Activemark and Sportsmark.

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 151

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 26

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 46%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian Denominations: **10%**

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 0%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 44%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 14%

Teaching Staff:

Full-time Teachers: 8

Part-time Teachers: 0

Percentage of Catholic Teachers: 100%

Support Staff:

Full-time Classroom Support Staff: 1

Part-time Classroom Support Staff: 3

Percentage of Catholic Classroom Support Staff: 50%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 12.5%

Percentage of learning time given to R.E:

10% in all Year Groups

Parishes served by the School:

St Mary's Cathedral

1.OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

2

MAIN FINDINGS

St Gerard's is a good Catholic school with a committed and able staff who are much valued by the new Headteacher whose developing vision, guided by the Governing Body, bodes well for the future. Outcomes for the pupils at St Gerard's are good due to good teaching that is well adapted to their varied needs. Progress is good because teaching is based on the clear assessment of pupils' work. The children enjoy the subject and take pride in it.

The provision for the Catholic education of the pupils is satisfactorily planned for and of good quality overall. The school has a safe, caring and purposeful environment where all are listened to and their contribution valued. This was particularly evident in the Reception Class lesson observed where every child's contribution was treated as a gift. The children have a strong sense of belonging and were able to give many examples of how important this is for them. They show respect, confidence and good manners to adults and to each other. The high expectations of the staff mean that behaviour is managed in a positive atmosphere. The children's behaviour is generally very good in class, when moving around the building and in the playground. Links to the parish, other Catholic schools and the wider community are seen as very important and are developing well.

Good spiritual and moral development is nurtured through Religious Education and informally by staff in the daily life of the school. The children enjoy prayer together and older pupils are capable of planning and delivering quality liturgy.

What the school needs to do to improve further :

- To ensure the consistent improvement of pupil attainment by embedding robust monitoring and evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Religious Education so that best practice is followed by every member of staff.
- To ensure variety and relevance in the provision of Collective Worship by developing staff and pupils' skills in planning, preparing and leading Collective Acts of Worship.
- To further develop community cohesion through partnerships with other schools and communities and with the Cathedral parish.

2. PUPILS

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

2

The standards attained at the end of KS2 are broadly average but are below average at the end of KS1. All pupils throughout the School make good progress in Religious Education, from a generally low starting point. This is shown clearly in the improving standard of written and oral work during each year's work. It is also evident in the work in the pupils' books which is plentiful, varied and increasingly independent in character. Pupils' oral work demonstrates that they gain a good knowledge and understanding of religion and a growing ability to reflect on meaning as they progress through the school. Children with Special Educational Needs are well catered for by support from Teaching Assistants and the considerable use of drama and discussion that affords them the opportunity to show what they know without always having to write.

Careful long, medium and short term planning in Religious Education, and delivery that takes full account of pupils' prior learning and experience, ensures the full coverage of the 'Here I Am' Scheme and that it meets the external requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Collaboration with other schools on moderation of assessment has confirmed the need to enhance the Religious Education of the most able pupils by providing greater challenge.

The pupils clearly enjoy and value their Religious Education lessons as the level of engagement is high and the use of practical work widespread. This was evident in the use of Drama in lessons seen in both Key Stages which linked both scripture and the Sacrament of Reconciliation to everyday life. Pupils take pride in producing good work in their Religious Education and want to do well.

Behaviour is very good and can be exemplary due to excellent pupil attitudes to adults and to each other arising from very positive behaviour management strategies used by staff throughout the school. There is an atmosphere of respect evident in all relationships. The children demonstrate a clear capacity for giving and receiving praise, thanks and forgiveness.

Pupils value the opportunities given to them to take responsibility and be genuinely involved, for example through the 'Playground Buddies' system, the school 'Eco Warriors' and the very active School Council. Such input by pupils ensures that they make an increasingly valuable contribution to the life and well-being of the school community. Pupils benefit from their participation in the school's range of extensive and varied extra-curricular activities, particularly the group of children regularly involved in the school Prayer Group; and they benefit from involvement in the activities organised to address the needs of others, as in their visits to the housebound during Advent.

Pupils can identify the religious aspects of their school, are ready to express their own views and understand the importance of key celebrations in school and parish during the liturgical year. They particularly value the celebration around the events of Holy Week and the school's Easter Party. Pupils readily take part in the regular and routine prayer life and Collective Worship in school, showing reverence and respect during individual, whole school and class-based worship. This was particularly evident during the Feast Day Mass attended by the whole school at the Cathedral. They know the traditional prayers of the Church and appreciate the involvement of their parents, carers and parish members when this is arranged. However their involvement in liturgy does not extend enough into the planning, preparing and leading of acts of worship. Though able to compose prayers they rely heavily on the leadership and initiative coming from staff.

• How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education?	2
❖ <i>the quality of pupils' learning and their progress</i>	2
❖ <i>the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress in Religious Education</i>	2
❖ <i>pupils' attainment in Religious Education</i>	3
• To what extent do pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school?	2
• How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship?	3

3. PROVISION

2

How effective the provision is for Catholic education

The teaching of Religious Education is good, promoting progress through enjoyable and purposeful learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge, use time and resources effectively, and employ varied questioning strategies to ensure good levels of engagement from children of all abilities. This was particularly evident in the Year 3 / 4 lesson observed, where the use of a variety of activities, including using camcorders to summarise discussion work, and carefully targeted questioning, ensured engagement of a wide range of children of different abilities in considering a scripture passage from Joel. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and use other adults effectively to support learning. Resources are of good quality and ICT is used well. The school makes good use of the Cathedral nearby as a magnificent aid to learning.

Assessment and the school's tracking of achievement in Religious Education are consistent and of good quality. These strategies, the development of pupils' self evaluation and the careful marking of work are beginning to enable the school to set individual targets for pupils so raising the standard of work in Religious Education to that of the other core subjects.

The key seasons of the Church's year are celebrated well but the impact of the school's provision for Collective Acts of Worship is limited. The lack of long term planning, the development of pupil and staff liturgy skills and their involvement in leading worship, means worship is satisfactory rather than good. Prayer in class is regular and appropriate but lacks variety.

The school is good at making its Catholic nature explicit through its learning environment. The school's lively but orderly and respectful atmosphere contributes to the school's Christian ethos. The Catholic Life of the school is enhanced by display work that is extensive, current and usually arises from work undertaken by the children. It is also supported by the school's positive reward and behaviour management systems that are based on high expectations, and by the respect shown in all relationships. It is clear that the realisation of each child's unique potential is an important aim of the school as implied in its Mission Statement.

• The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	2
• The effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education	2
• The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
• The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	3
• The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school	2

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

2

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

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good overall, with chaplaincy an emerging strength as the school's partnership with the other primary school in the parish develop. The school's recent evaluation of its strengths and development needs was good where ways to improve outcomes for pupils were linked to time limits and clear lines of responsibility within the improvement process. The school's leaders' planning and delivery of Collective Worship had good elements but was judged as satisfactory overall.

Systems for the collection of users' views, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and of pupils' work in Religious Education through work scrutiny are satisfactory and the inclusion of the Religious Education Co-ordinator on the Senior Management Team is set to strengthen this into a formal process. This further embedding will improve standards in Religious Education through the improved lesson planning and delivery that results from the sharing of good practice.

The Governing Body provides a good level of challenge and support for the developing role of the school's Senior Management Team in promoting the Catholic Life of the school. Governors understand and fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities well. They know the work of the school, its strengths and weaknesses and the impact of changes made through their evaluation of reports to them and by their regular visits. They are able to hold leaders and managers to account due to the

use of their various skills that are matched well to their assigned roles. They have undergone training on the distinctive nature of Catholic Schools and a designated governor to oversee Religious Education will be a helpful development.

The impact of the school’s various partnerships with other Catholic schools is benefiting the pupils. The school’s work with the Middlesbrough cluster of primary schools on the clarification of standards is improving the assessment of pupils’ work and the development of Chaplaincy in partnership with the other parish school will improve the spiritual life of pupils in both schools. Transition arrangements with the school’s partner Secondary School are satisfactory.

The development of Community cohesion is a high priority for the School and it has a valued role in the community. The Religious Education Programme and the liturgical life of the school promote understanding of other faiths as well as the value of their own. The school is heavily involved in local groups and issues such as Hemlington Inter-Agency and Children’s Centre but less so in global issues and does not have links with any schools of a different type or location. Parents feel involved in the life of the school as well as in their own child’s education through school liturgies and events, and curriculum information. They are supportive and speak in glowing terms of what the school is doing for their children. Chaplaincy within the school is good encouraging different types of prayer and will further benefit from the planned partnership working with other schools.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school, including chaplaincy provision, and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively leaders and managers promote and develop Community Cohesion 	3

5. THE SCHOOL'S CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

2

The school has demonstrated steady success in continuing to improve provision and outcomes for pupils since its last inspection, fully meeting the target set to improve assessment. It has clearly identified further priorities from self evaluation which have been included in the outline School Improvement Plan.

The new Headteacher's emerging vision for developing the Catholic Life of the school with the strong support from a stable, committed, able staff bodes well for the future. The support of the school's knowledgeable and involved Governing Body and the prospect of ever closer co-operation with its sister school in the parish should ensure that standards in all key areas of the schools, work are likely to continue to improve.