



**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 Primary School

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School URN: 120608

Headteacher: Mrs Geraldine Willders

Chair of Governors: Mrs Ann Sparrow

Inspectors: Mrs Anne Recchia

Mrs Jane Monaghan

Date of Inspection: 1 March 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 7 Religious Education lessons and 1 Act of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, two governors and the parish priest. Discussions were also held with pupils and a newly qualified teacher.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school improvement plan, attainment tracking information in Religious Education, teachers' planning, governors' reports, monitoring records and examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school and serves the parish of St. Mary's the Immaculate, Grantham. There are 211 pupils on roll of which 57% are baptised Catholics, 26% are baptised Christians from other denominations and 7% are from other faiths. 10% of pupils are from families with no religious affiliation. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is increasing and is above average. The proportions of disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those supported through school action and school action plus is above average. A below average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, (additional government funding for pupils entitled to free school meals, for children in public care and for pupils with a parent in the armed forces). The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

1

CATHOLIC LIFE

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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KEY FINDINGS

- St. Mary's is an outstanding school where its Catholic mission and vision is shared and actively promoted and practised by both staff and pupils. The headteacher and leadership team are highly motivated and committed to implement plans that ensure pupils' academic, spiritual, moral and social knowledge and skills are effectively developed. The headteacher has a clear vision for the continued development of the school and is inspirational in her leadership.
 - The Catholic life of the school is outstanding. It is very effectively monitored and evaluated to ensure that pupils are provided with high quality experiences, teaching and resources. Pupils are able to articulate the distinctive nature of the school. Their relationships with one another and adults in the school community are a testament to the positive effect the school has on their lives. The school promotes high standards of behaviour that reflect Gospel values and produce a harmonious community of mutual respect and forgiveness.
 - Collective Worship is outstanding. Pupils respond to and participate positively in the school's Collective Worship. Provision is well planned following themes from the Religious Education curriculum and the liturgical year. Pupils are beginning to take a more active role in planning and leading liturgy and worship. The school recognises that this is an area for further development following effective monitoring and evaluation of this aspect of the school.
 - Pupils' attainment in Religious Education is outstanding as a result of very effective teaching and well-targeted support. Most groups of pupils are making at least good progress over time with some groups making outstanding progress considering their low starting point. The curriculum is well designed and differentiated to meet the needs of most pupils. However, in some classes the use of higher order questioning skills would ensure that the prior knowledge and understanding of some of the most able pupils are tested and extended further.
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WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Develop the skills of pupils from an early age to plan and lead Acts of Collective Worship.
 - Further embed the use of the 'Let Us Pray' resource with all year groups.
 - Further develop opportunities for staff to develop their own liturgical skills and knowledge in order to support pupils in their liturgical development.
 - Further develop the use of different prayer styles.
 - Develop the use of assessment data and tracking information by the subject leader in Religious Education to inform strategic planning and ensure further improved outcomes for all groups of pupils.
 - Ensure that marking shows pupils how to improve their work and what the next steps in their learning should be.
 - Ensure that high achieving pupils are sufficiently challenged through higher order questioning to build on prior learning and extend and develop their thinking and analysis of tasks.
 - Develop opportunities for pupils to become more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school and ownership of plans for improvement.
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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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Almost all pupils are at the centre of shaping the school's mission statement and they are adept at articulating this. They are proud to belong to St. Mary's and are aware of the important role the school plays in the local community. The school endeavours to be a Christian presence in the area where meaningful links are forged with the neighbouring Sandon School and other local primaries. Pupils are welcoming and accepting of children whose life experiences are different from their own. Recent work on the values and visions related to the Olympic Games have impacted further on pupils' attitudes to each other and those in the wider community, giving them confidence and reasons to be proud of their Christian heritage. This is further complemented by the school embracing diocesan initiatives such as 'the little way week' and activities related to the Year of Faith. Outreach is a central feature of the school's work where pupils gain a heightened awareness of ethical issues by fund raising for the NSPCC and providing donations for the town's food bank. Pupils are provided with a wide range of opportunities for them to grow spiritually and develop their awareness of vocation. Mass is celebrated both in school and in the parish and a wide range of class and whole school liturgies further support spiritual growth. This will have an even greater impact when the pupils have more experience in planning and leading their own Acts of Worship. The newly formed liturgy group initiated by the pupils is a prime example of children helping each other to become more spiritually developed and alert to their own vocation. Visits to the church help build a greater knowledge and understanding of the rituals of the Catholic faith and the Mass. The impact of these visits was evidenced in the lessons observed where pupils drew on prior knowledge of their talks with Father Anthony about the Mass. Behaviour of all groups of pupils is exemplary, they have a strong sense of personal worth and those not of the Catholic tradition feel accepted and valued.

The leadership of the school is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The community of St. Mary's benefits from inspirational leadership qualities of the headteacher and a shared vision promoted by staff and governors. The promotion of the Catholic ethos of the school is clearly a core leadership responsibility for the headteacher. The Catholic Life of the school is given high priority as evidenced in the school improvement plan, Religious Education action plans, governor and headteacher reports and a wealth of monitoring and evaluation data produced by the Religious Education subject leader. The link governor for Religious Education is proactive in monitoring the Catholic Life of the school and parental attendance at Acts of Worship is high, she has a good overview of where development needs to take place. Opportunities for pupils to become more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school should be developed to ensure that pupils have greater ownership of plans

for improvement. The impact of monitoring and evaluation has highlighted Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) as a priority for development and there are actions in place to address this in the Summer Term of 2013. Further development work will be to link 'statements to live by' with the 'Come and See' programme. Self evaluation is a coherent reflection impacting on knowledge and understanding of where the school needs to develop further and the school views this as crucial in all aspects of Religious Education.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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Collective Worship is a strong feature of the school's work and is very much appreciated by the pupils. They respond to a variety of creative approaches which impact on their knowledge and understanding of the scriptures, prayer life and sense of mission. During the Act of Worship observed, pupils responded and participated through answering well pitched questions, saying formal prayers and accepting the invitation to pray silently and informally. Interactive elements enhanced the participatory aspect of the Act of Worship where all were requested to write a prayer to be displayed later. The opening prayers invited pupils to pray together as the family of St. Mary's, this instantly set the scene and enabled all groups of pupils to express themselves as part of the family. Pupils responded enthusiastically to the themes of the Act of Worship which were topical and well pitched. Pupils in all key stages joined in with the communal hymn singing. Similar positive responses to Collective Worship were evidenced during lessons where the pupils benefitted from an atmosphere conducive to prayer and reflection. Pupils have a good understanding of liturgy and to impact even further on their responses, they need to be given additional opportunities to plan and deliver their own Acts of Worship and explore different kinds of prayer styles such as meditation.

Opportunities for Collective Worship provided are well planned and contain all the elements to guarantee a meaningful experience for the pupils. The headteacher models this successfully with other staff thereby developing their skills in this area. The themes addressed are topical, for example the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI and the Women's World Day of Prayer. Pupils extend their knowledge of the liturgical year through good quality Collective Worship which in turn impacts on their work in Religious Education lessons. The quality and variety of liturgy are central to the vibrant Catholic Life of the school. Masses are well planned and non-eucharistic liturgies are pitched to engage all key stages in a scheduled programme of Collective Worship. The Catholic character of the school is reflected in good quality formal prayerful opportunities. All pupils benefit from this, irrespective of their faith background. The recently established liturgy group is another vehicle for pupils to explore and plan their own Acts of Worship. Staff are availing of opportunities to develop their own liturgical skills and in turn guide pupils in their choice of appropriate music and choice of artefacts. This will impact positively when, in turn, pupils will make these choices for themselves.

The leadership team has a thorough knowledge of how to prepare and deliver high quality Acts of Worship which reflect the traditions of the Church and are regularly monitored and evaluated. Personal, spiritual development for all staff is a priority and complementing this is the provision of INSET training for them to increase their skills at lesson delivery and Acts of Worship. As part of the monitoring systems, the school actively seeks the views of parents and is intent on getting a greater response by adapting future questionnaires to gain feedback from a wider section of the community. The governing body is effective, proud of the school and its achievements and instrumental in steering the Catholic Life of the school community. As part of their monitoring role, governors regularly attend liturgies and school Masses. They are informed about recent staff developments in the provision for Collective Worship as it leads to favourable outcomes for pupils. All aspects of monitoring impact on school development and lead to an awareness of the priorities for further improvement. The headteacher is knowledgeable about the needs of the local Catholic community and staff feature prominently in parish life.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- 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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Pupils show high levels of interest and engagement in lessons, they are enthusiastic about Religious Education and concentrate well both when working with an adult and independently, as a result - most pupils remain on task throughout lessons. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary and almost all lessons proceed without interruption. Most pupils enter school with limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. They make rapid progress in the Foundation Stage, quickly acquiring age appropriate religious language to describe biblical events and interpret sources and symbols. Progress of almost all groups throughout the school is at least good given their low starting point and outstanding for those pupils with disability or special educational need and those with an entitlement to free school meals. High achieving pupils, however, do not make as rapid progress as other groups as they are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons. The standards of attainment in Religious Education of almost all groups of pupils are at least in line with diocesan averages in Religious Education by the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. A small minority of pupils exceed expected levels by the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2 however, the majority of pupils are achieving levels above expectations. Pupils show through their actions and relationships that they know and understand their own unique vocations.

The majority of the teaching is outstanding and never less than consistently good. This is evident both in lessons and in the work produced by the pupils over time. Teachers use a variety of strategies which ensure that pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and are motivated to learn and develop curiosity and enthusiasm for the subject. Most lessons are well planned and well differentiated to cater for the learning styles, needs, maturity and aptitude of the pupils. Most groups of pupils are sufficiently challenged to produce their best work. However, in some classes the use of higher order questioning skills would ensure that the prior knowledge and understanding of some of the most able pupils are tested and extended further. Oral and written feedback to pupils is supportive and contributes to pupils' learning and progress in Religious Education. Pupils are aware of their targets in the subject and are beginning to assess their work against these. Teachers confidently and accurately assess pupils' work and plan lessons to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Some teachers use written feedback to inform pupils of the next step in their learning. This practice needs to be more consistently implemented across all year groups. In most lessons, time is used effectively to ensure there is a good pace to the learning and pupils are able to consolidate and build on prior learning thus ensuring that progress is rapid and sustained.

The headteacher, subject leader for Religious Education and governors ensure that Religious Education is given sufficient priority in terms of resourcing and training to ensure teaching and learning are at least as good as other core subjects and in some cases, better. Whole school self-evaluation by leaders and managers, including governors, is both honest and accurate as a result of regular and challenging monitoring of the subject. Data from regular assessments is effectively collated and good tracking systems are in place to ensure groups of pupils can be compared and that progress is monitored. This is beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning but needs further development to ensure that any dips in progress are tackled swiftly and all groups of pupils are able to make outstanding progress. The subject leader for Religious Education is committed and inspirational. She provides well-targeted support for the teachers based on current developments in Religious Education. Teachers value her expertise and tackle new initiatives to improve outcomes for pupils enthusiastically. As a result, Religious Education has a high profile in the school and has a profound effect on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. The new 'Come and See' programme has been well embraced by teachers and pupils. It is adapted skilfully and creatively in order to cater for the needs and interests of pupils ensuring they make at least good progress and often outstanding progress in Religious Education. Good links exist with other agencies, the parish and wider community for example, which enrich the curriculum, promote pupils' learning and provide pupils with first hand and quality experiences of the liturgical life of the Catholic Church and other faith communities.

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.

