



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

OUR LADY OF FATIMA CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 19th - 20th September 2011
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr John Peeney
School address	Winchfield Drive Harborne Birmingham B17 8TR
Telephone number	0121 429 2900
E-mail address	enquiry@olfatima.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	February 2008
DCSF School Number	330 3374
Unique Reference Number	103461
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Martin

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TODAY

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 6 religious education (RE) part lessons to observe teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. He observed the school's work, including assemblies, and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and pupils' work.

Information about the school

Our Lady of Fatima is an average size, oversubscribed, primary school with 210 pupils on roll, of whom 93% are baptised Catholic. The majority of pupils come from a White British background with below average percentages of pupils with special needs and English as a second language. The school serves the community and parish of Our Lady of Fatima, Quinton, but is situated quite some distance from the parish church. There are strong links with other churches and schools in the area, particularly with Hagley High School. Almost all staff are practising Catholics who are qualified to teach religious education with the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Pupils' attainment on entry and prior knowledge of the Faith are broadly as expected at Early Years Foundation Stage.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

Our Lady of Fatima Primary School provides an outstanding Catholic education for all its pupils, and the whole school community is shot through with a rich and vital Catholic ethos: an environment where all are made welcome. A marked strength of the school is its impact on the developing spirituality of all its pupils, and the living out of shared values in a distinctive Catholic form, which is far removed from the purely secularist, materialistic view of life. The school is a joyful, prayerful place where pupils respond willingly and personally to daily prayer and participate well in presenting liturgical celebrations. The spiritual life of the pupils is diligently nurtured and developed in a clearly enunciated, distinctive Catholic atmosphere, where the message of the Gospels is lived and celebrated. The school reaches out effectively to the local community and beyond in a wide variety of ways.

Outcomes from the religious education programme are good, with good, and sometimes better than good learning and progress at both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs, as a result of extra support in lessons, and tasks which are successfully tailored to their learning needs, achieve as well as the others. The religious education programme makes a tremendous contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. Rated a very good school at the last inspection it has gone from strength to strength, thanks to strong, effective leadership, which knows how to communicate vision very effectively, ensure good quality teaching, and clear, objective planning for the future. The areas for development raised at the last inspection have been effectively addressed. These included the developmental aspect of the marking of pupils' work, and the ongoing work to ensure consistency and challenge across the school in pupils' work. The impact of strategies put in place has resulted in a significant improvement in the formative quality of the marking of written work. Religious education and Catholic life are closely monitored through well-embedded procedures, which include specific in-service education and subject reviews and reports. A major re-visit of the school's mission statement is planned to start imminently. The school knows itself well and plans both effectively and sets targets which are clearly measurable in terms of relevance and impact.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed a consistent use of assessment and tracking data to inform teaching, particularly lesson objectives, which both meet and challenge all pupils' abilities
- Develop all pupils' skills in independently planning and leading collective worship

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment are above expectation and, given that pupils enter the school with broadly expected levels of prior knowledge and religious experience, this represents good achievement. The quality of learning and progress for pupils with special educational needs is equal to that of the other pupils thanks to extra support in lessons and tasks suited to their learning needs. From Reception through Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress in coming to understand the significance and special nature of prayer, grasping a basic knowledge and understanding of the stories in the Gospels, and the first ideas of symbolism and Sacrament. In Year 1 for example they were already familiar with the style of a psalm and were able to compose their own simple versions of praise of God and His creation.

By the end of Year 6 pupils have a well internalised knowledge and understanding of the Faith and are able to, for example, explain the differences between other Christians and Catholics. They are very secure in understanding the meaning behind the parables and the teachings of Jesus. They are less confident, however, in discussing or making links with other faiths and viewpoints. In their written work they demonstrate their growth in spirituality, reflecting on what they have learned and composing their own personal prayers. Nor are they beyond tackling transcendent topics such as the Trinity and the Holy Spirit with a fair degree of success in their own words.

All pupils benefit from the vibrant Catholic life of the school and make an excellent contribution to it, not least in their joyful attitude and caring behaviour. They are very appreciative of what the school is offering them but also feel that they are partners in their own education and can make their voices heard. They respond generously to the needs of others, be it charities such as Fr Hudson's Society, the Rwandan Appeal, the Lenten Toy Fair. More importantly, they do it because, as they explained, they are following Jesus' example. Year 6 are proud and diligent in their responsibilities towards the reception children, as Year 5 are in being playground friends. Every year group will shortly play a key role in the whole school reflection exercise on its mission.

Pupils' response to, and participation in, collective worship is joyful and wholehearted, celebrating well-planned liturgies. They are able to develop to a certain extent the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgy in assemblies and participate in celebrating the Eucharist, but would benefit from more opportunities for independent ownership of their liturgy planning. Their reverent demeanour at prayer is quite natural and their belief in the power of prayer is evident in the many beautiful prayers composed by individuals and used in their classrooms. They sing and pray enthusiastically and move into reflective stillness with little effort. As one pupil summed it up: 'I like talking to God about His world'. The parish priest is an always available and supportive figure in the celebration of the Mass and the Sacraments, and a welcomed presence in the school and classroom.

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

The Catholic life of the school is promoted very effectively by the leadership and example of the senior leadership, as well as all teachers and assistants. They plan realistically and review continually its impact on both staff and pupils. There are clear procedures in terms of feedback from parents and pupils shaping the development plan, and regular reports to the governing body on the school's ethos and religious education. The distinctive nature of a Catholic school is developed through regular Inset for staff. A whole school revisit of the mission statement is planned for this

year and will involve all members of the school community. The introduction of prayer bags and the Wednesday Word has been very successful and is seen as an important part of the school's mission to support parents in educating their children in the Faith. Collective worship is monitored, with close liaison between governors, senior leadership and the RE co-ordinator to ensure a good provision for assemblies and liturgies. A spiritual audit was carried out by staff last year and this successfully prompted discussion and sharpened focus on improving the quality of Catholic life and spirituality. The success of leadership and management is seen in the pupils' outstanding behaviour and real care for others and their very good relationships with peers and staff.

The governing body provides effective challenge and knowledgeable support for the Catholic dimension of the school, setting targets for performance and visiting the school, being present at special Masses and liturgies. Governors meet all statutory and canonical requirements fully, such as those pertaining to curriculum and time allocated to religious education. The chair of governors is a very frequent visitor, liaising closely with the headteacher, and a supportive and effective animator in steering the governing body. As a consequence the governing body is very well informed about Catholic life and aspects of RE which enables them to monitor and challenge more effectively.

The leadership and management of RE is excellent because there is great attention to detail in every aspect of the subject. The process of establishing more effective tracking of progress and achievement, as well as levels of attainment, is being successfully embedded, while the school recognises the need for further work in using data to inform teaching. Priorities are clearly laid out and planned for and lesson observations and book trawls are resulting in best practice being shared. All staff have an RE performance management objective with frequent reviews presented to the governors. The level of self evaluation and the analysis of results at both stages informs planning and objectives and this focus has resulted in areas previously noted for development being steadily transformed.

The Our Lady of Fatima School is an excellent exemplar of community cohesion. Its mission calls it to openness to all who come through its doors and to live out and be a signpost of a markedly Catholic spirit in all it does. There is a clear policy promoted by governors and senior staff, which results in an open, inviting community and a generous outreach to the local and global community. This includes Festival of Faiths celebrations, a visit to a mosque, and close links with local schools such as the Hagley pyramid. Pupils support CAFOD and other global charities with great generosity. The school has also adopted the International Primary Curriculum, which successfully develops the pupils' global awareness. The visit of the Pope to Birmingham last year was a great stimulus to the whole school community, and affirmed the sense of belonging to the world wide Church and its mission. Pupils of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their beliefs comfortably. All groups of pupils feel included and join in every aspect of the school's life.

The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

The quality of teaching is invariably good, with outstanding practice observed during inspection especially in the upper end of the school, where a growing development of independent learning and thinking skills is making a real impact on learning and progress. The teachers have a very secure subject knowledge and plan lessons well with a variety of activities. The marking of pupils' work is generally both helpful and challenging. Teaching in the best lessons encourages the pupils to think for themselves, and the more able certainly benefit from more demanding opportunities. Where the teacher's questioning is challenging and searching, the response from pupils indicates better intellectual effort. Where teaching is less effective it is not always pitched effectively to provide real challenge, based on what the child knows already and to build from there. Also on occasion over focus on the activity distracts from the lesson objective. Teaching assistants prove invaluable in meeting the learning needs of pupils in smaller ability groups very effectively.

Assessment for learning is having a growing impact on lesson planning to meet the different learning needs of the pupils but this has to be further developed and embedded. The scrutiny of written work

indicates that formative marking is a great aid to improvement over time, and sets up a dialogue between teacher and pupil, which both encourages and challenges. This good practice is spreading throughout the school and beginning to inform teaching strategies, but is not yet consistent.

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils fully. Curriculum Directory and diocesan requirements are met. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly, consistent with the teaching of the Church. Teaching about other faiths is included in the curriculum, and work on displays such as that on Sikhism has impact, but pupils would benefit from a little deeper study which will help them understand and have a conversation about similarities and differences between the world's major religions. Resources are well managed, ICT is used very effectively as a teaching aid, and prominent and colourful displays on walls create a visual, daily reminder of the distinctive character of a Catholic school.

Provision for collective worship is excellent, with many opportunities for spiritual nourishment through prayers and assemblies. Masses are celebrated on key liturgical days and the sacramental preparation programmes are well planned. The new liturgy responses in the Mass are being taught effectively to the pupils. The liturgical season is well marked and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week, with Easter drama and processions. Older pupils have the opportunity to go on retreat to Alton Castle which they look forward to and use well.