



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST FRANCIS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 29th February - 1st March
Reporting Inspector Teresa Quick

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Sister Helen Ryan
School address	Nursery Road Handsworth Birmingham B19 1PH
Telephone number	0121 464 5072
E-mail address	enquiry@stfranrc.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2007
DFE School number	330 3342
Unique Reference Number	103437

Headteacher Mr Mark Humphreys

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed 4 part RE lessons with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. She held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, and parish priest. She observed a whole school prayer service and hymn practice and undertook a learning walk through the other classes from Years 1-6 to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, the use of the prayer room and pupils' behaviour. She looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about collective worship, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average, two form entry Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Francis in Handsworth, Birmingham. Many of the pupils come from deprived households. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 18% reflecting the local population. Many of the Catholic children are migrants from war torn countries of Congo and Eritrea and economic migrants from Poland and Lithuania. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 97%. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The numbers of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities is also above average. Attainment on entry is very low compared to the national average.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation St Francis School judges itself to be a good Catholic school. It is first and foremost a Catholic school and they recognise and respect the different cultures within the school. They rightfully consider that the school is a place of light and hope where children of different races and faiths are taught to seek to follow the Gospel values of truth and love. "Truth and love" is the motto of the school. The mission of the school underpins all they do. They seek to support the families in their endeavours to bring up their children as the followers of Christ in challenging circumstances. The school is well supported by the governors and parish priest. The Catholic life of the school is excellent. The school makes outstanding efforts to support their vulnerable children, both within the curriculum and through the pastoral work undertaken by learning mentors, the inclusion team and the wider community. In each of these aspects the school's judgement is accurate. Religious education is correctly considered to be good. Most pupils enjoy their RE. They feel happy, safe, and secure within a vibrant Catholic ethos. All the work in RE is regularly evaluated and reviewed and actions towards improvement taken.

School self evaluation

The school's processes of self evaluation are exceptional in their thoroughness, detail and impact. The school's evaluation of its Catholic life is comprehensive and identifies clearly the excellent contribution made by pupils and governors. The evaluation reflects the high quality of leadership of the school and of religious education. It is based on thorough effective monitoring processes which are planned across the year. Audits have been undertaken of the Catholic life. The results are analysed and action taken, for example by improving the environment of the school so that it better informs the Catholic ethos.

There is a strong relationship between audit, monitoring and evaluation on the one hand and development planning on the other. For example, an outcome of an RE skills audit was the formation of an RE team. Monitoring of lessons in RE is carried out as part of the school's observation cycle. This means that not every teacher is seen teaching RE annually but during the period of the cycle. The accurate assessment of teaching and learning as good was established after observations of teaching RE, learning walks, planning and assessment scrutiny and the monitoring of the pupils' books and pupil interviews over a period of time. Lesson observations are positive in their support, but give clear indications about how to improve learning. In order to achieve consistent progress across year groups and throughout the school, coaching and advice from the curriculum leaders has been put in place. Where there is a non Catholic class teacher at least one lesson of RE each week is taught by a Catholic. That teacher will then support the class teacher with the planning for the other lesson. The school has the benefit of the subject leader being non class based and therefore able to support this work. Teaching groups differ in challenge but generally planning shows work arranged to meet individual pupil's needs. Teaching assistants and learning mentors greatly assist the quality of the learning helping ensure that most pupils are interested, learning and behave well.

The school accurately judges the curriculum to be good. Within the curriculum the school initiates projects that stimulate the pupils' interests. The curriculum is enhanced through the use of resources and expertise beyond the school. Pupils' awareness and respect of other faiths and cultures is high and is celebrated at key points throughout the year. The curriculum is well focused. It is regularly reviewed. End of unit assessment portfolios have been collated and whole class tracking using curriculum assessment focuses. Analysis of these has led to changes in planning and phase inset in order to develop higher order skills in pupils from Years 4-6. The use of ICT in RE by pupils observed is limited. The school had recognised that they must challenge pupils in Key Stage 2 to higher levels in RE, continue to develop teaching skills in higher order questioning and extend independent learning. These are challenging tasks in particular as there is high mobility within the school.

In view of the quality of the school self evaluation and the developments that the senior management team and subject leader have put in place the capacity for improvement in both the Catholic life and religious education is good. Governors are in agreement with the school's evaluation of the Catholic life and RE. The chair of governors has an excellent understanding of the school and leads the governors in supporting and challenging the school. Planning is being developed to enhance further governors' contact with the classes.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for the pupils are good in RE. The school is working to achieve a consistency of learning across the school. Pupils enter school with very low knowledge and understanding of the faith. Throughout the school most pupils make good progress. In Year 2 pupils generally are working at a level expected for their age. In Year 6 pupils are reaching national expectations. The monitoring is carefully analysed to show how the different groups of pupils achieve including those new to the school. Pupils with learning needs make at least satisfactory progress. They are well supported and the tasks are clearly structured to meet their needs. The school is working to extend pupils' thinking with *HOT* (higher order thinking) questions.

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

Due to the inspirationally led Catholic ethos pupils' acquire attitudes, values, relationships and commitment to the school community, spiritual, moral and vocational development that are good. There are clear behavioural expectations which are linked to the teaching of Jesus. Pupils learn to understand the importance of forgiveness in relationships. Pupils are valued and respect is encouraged throughout the school. There is a strong community bond. Collective worship is good and the response of pupils in prayer and liturgy is outstanding. They pray well and the prayers that they write themselves show development overtime are considered and often heartfelt.

Provision is good overall. Planning is effective and adjusted to meet the needs of the various groups of pupils whether by the provision of different tasks or through support of teaching assistants or the learning mentors. As a result of school development planning, cross curricular themes have been implemented across the school which promote Catholic values, ethos and a sense of vocation. The assessment processes are well considered. Teachers' marking is positive and often gives guidance for improvement. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and has been adapted to ensure all learn about and from other religions. A strength of the curriculum is the way the school uses the pupils' own experiences and local expertise to support this area of learning. The school encourages pupils to respect the lives, cultures and beliefs of others in the school, the local community and beyond the school community.

Recommendations

The teachers should continue to challenge pupils in Key Stage 2 to achieve higher levels in religious education.

The teachers should develop their higher order questioning skills and encourage the pupils further to become independent learners.

Ensure a greater use of ICT as a research tool and to improve the pupils' interest and learning in RE.



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March 2012

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School, March 2012

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school has an outstanding Catholic ethos where the pastoral care of your children is exemplary. The Catholic mission underpins all that the school does. The children make good progress in their Religious Education. The pupils are proud of the school they enjoy their learning in Religious Education and take an active part in the Masses and liturgies. Most children work and play happily together. The teachers encourage the children to behave well both in class and around the school. They are polite and most welcoming. The teachers regularly review the teaching and what is learned in RE together with the Catholic life of the school to ensure that your children receive the best possible religious education they can in an environment where all are respected.

I have recommended that the teachers continue to challenge the pupils in Key Stage 2 to achieve even higher levels in RE. The school has received new laptops thus enabling greater use of computers to support the children's interest and learning in Religious Education. I also asked the teachers to encourage you to come and support your children in the Catholic life of the school.

It was a privilege and pleasure to inspect the school. The children and staff made me feel most welcome. The children are a credit to the school, to their families and those who care for them.

Yours sincerely

Teresa Quick
Diocesan Inspector