



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Crookhams, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. AL7 1PG

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Headteacher: Mrs C. McMahon

Chair of Governors: Mrs K. Day

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 29th November 2010
Date of previous inspection: 25th February 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M. Betts

Description of School

Holy Family is a one form entry primary school with nursery provision for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. There are 200 full time pupils on roll, 174 (87%) of whom are Catholic. There are 11 part-time nursery pupils. There are 13 teachers in the school of whom 9 (69%) are Catholic. The school serves those who live within the boundaries of Holy Family and St Bonaventure within the parish of Welwyn Garden City. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds with just over a quarter coming from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages. When compared nationally the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The school hosts a breakfast club and an after school club.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Holy Family is an outstanding Catholic school. The strong Catholic identity is present in the school's daily life. The committed leadership of the headteacher, religious education subject leader and governors is instrumental in effectively maintaining and developing the Catholic ethos and religious education. Prayer and worship have a very strong central role in the school's life. Relationships within the school are very good and reflect Christian respect and concern for others. The pupils explained "We are all friends here and feel very safe and secure". The pupils' personal, spiritual and moral development is outstanding and this is reflected in their good behaviour and very positive attitudes. Pupils enjoy religious education and praise the creative aspects of the curriculum. Staff are committed to the very high profile given to this subject in the school.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The last inspection report described the school as "a good Catholic school". The issues for improvement related to developing religious education assessment and tracking, and developing the governors' role to ensure a greater familiarity with religious education in the classroom. The school has made very good progress in both these areas. Assessments linked to national levels of attainment are made regularly using a variety of tasks. These are moderated across the school and to ensure consistency of judgements the teachers combine with those from another Catholic school for further moderation. The governing body ensures that one governor takes a particular interest in the religious education teaching.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The headteacher and religious education subject leader have a good oversight of the school's strengths and development needs through their monitoring processes. The religious education plan is extremely comprehensive and has been influenced by diocesan and other training advice. The leadership promotes a clear vision which is well supported by the staff. The staff are committed to the success of the school and to improving their skills by attending appropriate courses. Trialling a new religious education programme has encouraged all staff to evaluate their teaching and has influenced more creativity and child initiated learning in their planning. One performance management target for each teacher is linked to religious education. The school has a very good capacity to continue to improve.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Raising religious education achievement further by planning success criteria which would challenge the more able pupils to achieve their next target level.
 - Developing marking by consistency of more effective feedback to pupils and providing opportunities for them to make improvements to their work.
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The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The headteacher, religious education subject leader and governors form an effective partnership for maintaining and promoting the Catholic life of the school. The school mission statement "As a family we live, love, learn and celebrate with Jesus" is understood by the pupils and integral to all aspects of the school's daily life. One pupil explained "Jesus is our friend. He is part of our school". Attractive displays around school confirm the Catholic identity. Governors are very supportive and are kept well informed about the school's religious life. Leadership promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development very well. Pupils willingly undertake responsibilities to help younger pupils at playtime and with reading activities. They value and praise the friendly, caring attitude of the teachers who listen to them and help them to solve any problems. Pupils' achievements are valued and celebrated. The school is building stronger links with parents. Their parish connections are very strong and the parish priest is well known by the school community.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

Worship and prayer are an integral part of each school day. Pupils know a range of different prayer styles and write their own prayers and Advent promises. Worship uses visual presentation, often prepared by pupils, and high quality singing with signing actions to enrich the experience. By leading class assemblies all pupils contribute to worship and the older pupils are becoming more involved in its planning. Prayer and worship have a strong impact on pupils' spiritual development with a quiet time given for pupils to reflect on the theme. Pupils are very respectful during prayer, participate with sincerity and enjoy these experiences. Mass is well planned following the liturgical year and celebrated regularly by both classes and the whole school. Parents and parishioners are invited. Pupils are given the opportunity for individual confession during Advent and Lent. The parish priest contributes very well to the life of the school and also leads liturgies for the younger children. Pupils appreciate the introduction of a voluntary prayer group led by the deputy.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school /college promote community cohesion?

The school is a welcoming and inclusive community which seeks to provide for individual children's needs. The diversity of cultures within the school is positively valued and celebrated

as shown by the weeklong project focusing on the "European Day of Languages" where parents were invited to share their different traditions. The school has good links with other Catholic schools and teachers' expertise is shared. The school contributes positively to the parish. The pupils show their compassion for others and understand they are living out their Catholic duty by raising money for a variety of national and international charities often using their own ideas, and support is also given to the local hospice. Worship allows pupils time to apply the theme to their own lives and experiences. The school plans to use community resources, for example the local synagogue, for other faith learning. Pupils work with others from different faith backgrounds during sporting and musical events. The school plans to develop links with a non-faith school in a different kind of locality.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Pupils are achieving religious literacy at a good rate across the school. The majority of pupils achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and many exceed these. The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good and they are encouraged to acquire an increasing depth of thought as they progress through the school. Pupils are attentive and behave well. Their books are well presented, evidencing a very good coverage of the curriculum. There is a good variety of written activities including work relating to Scripture. Most pupils enjoy their religious education lessons especially when doing practical activities or where they can use their own initiative to present their findings. They also appreciate working together in small groups.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching is good overall with many outstanding features seen. Teachers plan thoroughly with clear learning intentions. Where teaching is best visual presentation and puppets are used to motivate learning; talk partners are used well to develop confidence in ideas; tasks are interesting and purposeful; and success criteria are clearly defined. All pupils make progress in their learning. Assessments are made using a good variety of tasks. The criteria for the judgements are recorded. All teachers use marking to praise pupils' work and in a few books improvement points were suggested and a further response made. Parents are informed of future religious education topics and how they can help with these at home.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is very good, and suitable for the age of the learners. It fulfils the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. Over 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education using the "Here I Am" scheme with other religious education programmes used as resources. Extra events such as the papal visit are included into the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to question and reflect so becoming aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Religious education is linked creatively with other areas of the curriculum, particularly with ICT (Information and Communication Technology), PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education), drama, literacy, and art. The religious education curriculum makes a

powerful contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils are taught to respect other faiths. Attractive religious education displays often using pupils' work give added value to this core subject. All classes visited the church recently for additional teaching using the parish priest and the church building as extra resources. This made a very significant impact on pupils' learning.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The religious education subject leader working closely with the school leadership ensures this subject has the highest profile across the school. She is enthusiastic and thorough and has worked very hard to ensure issues from the last inspection and advice given is acted upon and improvements made. Monitoring of lessons, books and planning which also involves gathering pupils' opinions about religious education, ensures that the school's self-evaluation is accurate. The subject leader guides and supports teachers very well. Equality of opportunity is promoted very well. Three teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) qualification. The budget for religious education and worship is high and above that allocated to other core subjects. The school has a good range of resources for delivering the curriculum.

Grade 1