

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

68 Georges Road, Holloway, London N7 8JN

27th February 2015



A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade I

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy is outstanding. This is because the commitment and dedication of the headteacher has ensured that religious education is at the heart of the curriculum and is very well funded through resources, time and staffing. Senior leaders are excellent role models for all staff and thorough monitoring and support of new staff has led to teaching which is typically outstanding. Leaders at all levels have ensured that the outstanding curriculum captures the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent which is reflected in outstanding pupil progress. Pupils' attainment in religious education is very good and all groups make excellent progress. By Year 6 pupils' religious literacy is of a very high standard and they are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. The well informed governing body provides a good balance of challenge and support and is active in the life of the school.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade I

The school's overall effectiveness in this area is outstanding. The commitment to its Catholic identity is evident in all aspects of its work. Catholic faith is at the centre of the whole school curriculum overview and strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' experiences of sacramental celebrations. The fullness of the Catholic faith and way of life is presented through the teachings and traditions of the Church in a way which engages and inspires pupils. Prayer and worship are central to all that the school does and the commitment to social justice and the Common Good is well understood by pupils. Relationships and behaviour are excellent within the school and pupils take advantage of the many opportunities available to serve the school and wider community. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and express great appreciation of the way their children's faith life is nurtured.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited sixteen lessons and one assembly, and carried out nine interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School Islington was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Mrs Pamela Brannigan	Lead Inspector
Mrs Catherine McMahon	Associate Inspector
Mrs Ann Staunton	Associate Inspector

Description of School

This Voluntary Aided school is two form entry in the LA of Islington and the locality of Holloway. The school serves the parishes of The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Holloway and St Gabriel, Upper Holloway. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 88%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 8% and from other Faiths 4%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 78%.

There are 422 pupils on roll, with 3 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHC). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals. One hundred and ninety pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

Telephone:	020 7607 3407
e-mail address:	admin@sacredheart.islington.sch.uk

DFE Number:	206-3384
URN Number:	100437

Headteacher:	Mr John Lane
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Laura King

Date of previous inspection:	22 nd June 2009
Previous Inspection grades:	

Key for inspection grades:	<i>Grade 1 Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 2 Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3 Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4 Causing Concern</i>

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

The last report in 2009 lists only one target in relation to classroom education: 'Ensure more teachers gain the CCRS qualification as part of the school's professional development programme.' Since that time the number of staff holding the qualification has increased from two to six with another five in the process of completing the course. This is in addition to regular continuing professional development for all staff. The introduction of the Composite Model three years ago has greatly increased the rates of progress and achievement of the pupils in the school which is now impressive.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 1

By following the Composite Model the school is already providing a systematic study of the areas in the Curriculum Directory, but the school also maps out how the various topics covered match this document. The programme is presented in a variety of imaginative ways and pupils are well aware of how their new learning is based on what has gone before and they are encouraged to make links. Resources, for example class sets of Bibles are well used to make sure all opportunities for learning are met. Staff are familiar with the way each topic fits with the Curriculum Directory as they are provided with a high level of support throughout each section to make sure that they are secure in all aspects.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 1

Pupils have an outstanding level of achievement. Religious education monitoring and tracking show that pupils attain at least the same level as in other core subjects. Internal tracking shows a large number of pupils make more than expected progress over Key Stage 2 with 47% working at level 5 in 2014. Moderation takes place at school, deanery and diocesan levels to ensure accuracy. Achievement has increased steadily over the last three years and current data shows that this is likely to be sustained.

This outstanding achievement is made possible because of the high expectations of all the staff, demonstrated in the tasks set within each lesson and the excellent questioning which encourages all pupils to express their answers using the correct religious language and vocabulary. Teaching staff model a high level of religious literacy themselves and pupils show real enthusiasm to join in with this. In a Year 6 lesson pupils were asked to make a 'paragraph' in answer to work on the feeding of the 5000 and were delighted in being able to link it with passages from the New and Old Testament and then with Catholic teaching and belief. Pupils' great interest and enjoyment of religious education was evident in all lessons observed during the inspection.

The quality of teaching

Grade 1

Teaching is typically never less than good and often outstanding. Children get an excellent start in Early Years Foundation Stage where teaching is calm, nurturing and purposeful. This continues throughout the school where teachers and support staff demonstrate outstanding subject knowledge. The impact on pupils' progress is evident in their books and the lessons observed. Planning is systematic and detailed to take account of pupils' earlier learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, both academically and personally. Support staff are very well deployed and make valuable contributions to pupils' learning. Pupils are able to make impressive links with previous learning and in a Year 5 lesson were able to link the Widow's Offering in Mark's gospel with St Therese of Lisieux's holiness being based on 'little things with great love'.

Outstanding teaching in religious education results in pupils who enjoy their lessons and are able to discuss their targets and next steps in learning with confidence and enthusiasm. Pupils are fully engaged during lessons and their behaviour is excellent. Marking is of a very high standard and teachers give developmental feedback in pupils' books enabling them to extend learning and improve their progress. Homework is set regularly and this encourages pupils to become independent learners and to develop their knowledge and understanding of religious concepts and meaning.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

The leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. This is due to the commitment to shared teamwork by the subject leaders in partnership with senior leadership. The subject leaders monitor teaching, workbooks, planning and pupil progress and ensure good support is given where needed. Carefully planned Inset, teachers' outstanding subject knowledge and on-going assessment techniques ensure there is an excellent level of challenge for the more able pupils. There is well thought out continuous professional development for teachers and other adults included in the learning process. This ensures that all staff are fully able to support pupils in religious education lessons. The school leadership is fully committed to enabling staff to obtain the CCRS qualification and support them in this process. The detailed school improvement plan clearly identifies issues for action and evaluates current provision for religious education. Governors are fully committed to the school and know it well. They are aware of the need for succession planning in Catholic education and this is evident in the opportunities available to staff as the headteacher supports another diocesan school this academic year.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Further increase the percentage of outstanding teaching by disseminating the existing expertise in the school.

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

The only key issue for development in this area identified in the last inspection was to strengthen even further the prayer life of the school through developing retreats for year groups. This has now been put in place leading to more opportunities for spiritual development. In addition since then the school has made a number of improvements in its provision of Catholic Life. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to plan and lead class worship, weekly class masses and seasonal devotions leading to a sense of ownership. The increased number of teachers with the CCRS qualification has led to greater staff confidence in enabling pupils to plan and lead worship.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade 1

The school views religious education as a core subject which permeates all areas of the curriculum and school life. This is reflected in the staffing and budget devoted to religious education and the excellent quality of resources available to staff. Across the school at least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education which is planned, tracked and monitored with rigour. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are very well supported by half termly meetings linked to the aspect of the Curriculum Directory being taught. This is in addition to the school's regular continuous professional development programme and excellent support for new staff. Religious education contributes enormously to pupils' personal, spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

Grade 1

The provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school is outstanding. Pupils are given opportunities to pray at regular times in the school day and each classroom has an attractive prayer focus and display board which reflects the liturgical year. Pupils are taught to pray in different ways and are given opportunities to write their own prayers, many examples of which were seen during the inspection. During class worship and assemblies pupils are reverent, respectful and able to join in the traditional prayers of the Church. Masses, liturgies and celebrations are carefully planned to enable pupils to actively prepare and lead worship. Pupils participate in and support parish life by attending mass each week on a rota basis to which they contribute through bidding prayers, readings, singing and as altar servers. Each class in Key Stage 2 also takes responsibility for organising one of the whole school masses in consultation with the parish priest. The importance placed upon Catholic traditions of prayer, worship and liturgies results in pupils being involved, engaged and aware of their own spirituality. The quality and opportunities for prayer and worship are reviewed and evaluated regularly and action taken on areas for development.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice

Grade 1

The commitment and contribution of the school community to the Common Good is a real strength of the school. The school has built partnerships with a number of agencies which share its understanding of the Gospel call to justice. Examples include the local Harvest food collection, the Catholic Children's Society Lenten appeal and Cafod's international development projects. Conversations with pupils indicate that supporting these organisations allows them to see gospel values put into practice. Older pupils show an understanding of the theology underpinning the Church's call to action for justice and peace and to appreciate that their own contribution can make a difference. The school also acknowledges the needs of its local community and covers themes of inequality, injustice and prejudice throughout the year. These are explored through Remembrance, Black History, Fairtrade, Anti-Bullying and eSafety. Assemblies, focus weeks and work in class all contribute to pupils' understanding of local and global issues. Pupils spoken to were very positive about the school and said they were all encouraged to respect each other and always do their best. They are familiar with the school's 3-5-7 vision which links the school's mission statement with keys to improvement and shared expectations. This vision underpins the school's constant striving for excellence and aims to prepare pupils to be good citizens in a rapidly changing world. To this end pupils are given opportunities to show leadership through a range of responsible roles including as prefects, monitors and members of the school council. Pupils also participate in the Islington Inter Faith Forum which supports their appreciation and understanding of their local community.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

Grade 1

The school makes every effort to maintain a strong partnership with parents and carers and works closely with them to develop a shared understanding of the mission of the school. Questionnaires indicate that parents overwhelmingly support the work of the school and appreciate the high standard of education and the support for prayer, worship and Catholic Life. They also believe the 'Wednesday Word' and weekly newsletters which include religious education items keep them well informed of the life of the school. They are given opportunities to express their views on their children's education and the school takes these into account in its response. Parish links are also excellent. Many pupils act as altar servers and readers at Sunday mass as well as the weekly mass which pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 attend on a rota basis. The parish newsletter regularly includes school news which enables parishioners to see it as a vital part of the community. The parish priest who is also a foundation governor is a frequent visitor to the school. He acts as a valuable learning resource as well as meeting the subject leader to plan masses, liturgies and visits to the church. He and the link governor also report back to the governing body on the religious education curriculum and the Catholic life of the school. The school sees itself as a Catholic school within the Diocese and demonstrates this through participation in training for both staff and governors. The headteacher and senior leadership attend diocesan conferences and have a leadership role in deanery moderation meetings. The support given to a neighbouring Catholic school by the headteacher exemplifies the commitment of leaders to Islington deanery and Westminster diocese.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

Grade 1

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in developing and promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding in the way in which Catholicity pervades all areas of school life. The headteacher, senior leadership, governing body and local clergy work together to ensure their clear vision of Catholic education and life is shared by the whole school community. Members of the governing body fully understand their roles and responsibilities and are well placed to be both supporting and challenging. They do this by keeping abreast of initiatives in religious education, regular meetings with subject leaders and support from the diocese through governor training. The headteacher and senior leaders are excellent role models who lead by example. They ensure that all staff participate fully in the religious life of the school which includes staff and class masses, religious assemblies, religious events and class visits. The mission statement 'To go forward together in Christ, to respect our neighbour, to always give of our best' underlines all of school life and is used as a prayer at the beginning of every assembly.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Manage the transition to the new building in order to maximise the potential benefits to school and parish
- Continue to develop opportunities for pupils to plan and lead class worship