



Diocese of Westminster

St Agnes Catholic Primary School

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DFE Number: 211 3397

URN Number: 100949

Headteacher: Ms B. McDaid

Chair of Governors: Mr E. Austin

**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: 12th September 2012

Date of previous inspection: 21st May 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P. Brannigan

Introduction

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

The Inspection of St Agnes Catholic Primary School, Bow was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspector is 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.

Description of School

The school is one form entry with nursery in Bow in the local authority of Tower Hamlets in London. It serves the parish of Our Lady and St Catherine of Siena where most pupils live. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 88% with 12% from other Christian denominations.

There are 227 pupils on roll, with 10 pupils who have statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is 70% and the number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above the national average. There is an above average number of families claiming free school meals. The school has achieved the Quality Mark in Education, the Artsmark and has Healthy Schools status.

Key for inspection grades.

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Satisfactory;
Grade 4: Causing Concern

A. Curriculum 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?

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

Grade I

The four strands of study in the Curriculum Directory are used to very good effect in the content of curriculum religious education. The subject leader cross references topics being taught to the area of the Curriculum Directory being covered. Staff are well supported in their medium term planning which clearly shows links to the Curriculum Directory. There is rigorous monitoring of the curriculum and pupil learning. Lesson plans show which aspect of the Curriculum Directory is being taught and which resources are to be used.

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

Grade I

Pupil achievement, attainment and progress in religious education are very good. Although pupils enter the school well below the national average, excellent provision at Foundation Stage is built on and high standards for all groups are evident. This has been achieved by a significant investment in resources, training and additional support staff. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards meet and sometimes exceed diocesan expectations. Lessons observed provided evidence of high teacher expectation and very well motivated pupils who are actively engaged in their own learning. Teaching is differentiated to support the range of needs in each class and pupils are given good feedback to enable them to take the next step in their learning.

The quality of teaching

Grade I

The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons observed during the inspection were outstanding or good and demonstrated high teacher expectation for all groups. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use a wide range of creative strategies to engage the full range of ability. Pupils make good progress and are encouraged to become independent learners who are able to develop their understanding of scripture and religious concepts. Class teachers use time well and pupils are given every opportunity to develop new skills and build on previous learning. Workbooks are well presented, marking is positive, interactive and targets are set for further improvement. Regular monitoring of teaching is in place followed by discussion and support if needed. Parents are enabled to support their children's learning through regular religious education newsletters.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade I*

The leadership and management of religious education are excellent and have a positive impact on the life of the school. The experienced subject leader is very well supported by the headteacher and parish priest who is also link governor. Together they ensure that clear vision and direction for religious education is shared by the whole school community. The subject leader models good practice and ensures that excellent support is given to new teachers and teaching assistants. High

expectations for staff and pupils ensure that religious education is taught with the same rigour as other core subjects. Staff are very well supported in their teaching through in-service training and frequent continued professional development. There is an excellent range of resources and the learning environment for religious education is very good. The governing body is well informed and are aware of current developments in the assessment of the subject. Religious education is given high priority in the School Improvement Plan.

What has improved in curriculum religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in curriculum religious education?

There were three areas for development in the last inspection report. These were linked to the development of assessment, the implementation of a new prayer policy and the monitoring of lessons. The school has responded well and there are now good assessment procedures which have enabled staff to set pupil targets and inform future planning. The implementation of the prayer policy has given pupils more opportunities for reflection and meditation. The more rigorous monitoring of religious education has enabled the school to identify areas where additional support is needed.

The school has identified two areas which will further improve curriculum religious education in the light of the new framework.

1. Continue the programme of continued professional development for staff to raise the overall quality of teaching to outstanding.
2. Broaden teachers' knowledge of the next steps in religious education learning and attainment to provide more effective challenge.

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

Overall Grade: I

The delivery of curriculum religious education meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory and its implementation is creative and dynamic. The quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress are very good and sometimes exceed diocesan expectations. Pupils can talk about their faith and identify ways it affects their lives and relationships. Good structures are in place to ensure quality teaching and monitoring. Self-evaluation is accurate and indicates a very good knowledge of the school and development areas for religious education. The subject leader models excellent practice and works to ensure pupils continue to make good progress. The headteacher, supported by all staff gives the subject a high priority which permeates all aspects of the life of the school.

B. The school as a Catholic Community

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

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum - time, resources, budget

Grade I*

Religious education receives at least 10% of curriculum time and has an equivalent budget to other core subjects. Resources are excellent and teaching assistants play a significant role in supporting pupils. They also create a visually rich learning environment through excellent displays. All staff receive in-service support and training relating to the Catholic life of the school. Governors provide strong support in reviewing and developing the place of religious education. The priest from the local parish is link governor and a frequent visitor. He plays a role in monitoring curriculum religious education and is an additional learning resource.

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

Grade I*

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and a key part of every celebration. Pupils are given many opportunities for prayer, meditation and reflection and religious education lessons often end with a concluding liturgy. Sacramental preparation which is parish based is given very good support within the school and reconciliation services are held twice a year. The school enables pupils to have a wide experience of Catholic traditions of prayer and worship. This includes the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary. A highlight of the liturgical year is the May procession when every class prepares an altar which is visited by the whole school community including parents, families and parishioners. Pupils are engaged in the preparation of liturgies and the masses which are an established part of the school's provision. Pupils' spiritual development is nurtured through curriculum education and permeates the wider life of the school. During the inspection pupils from Year 6 led a powerful class assembly linked to the recent Olympic and Paralympic games. This included reflections on aspects of faith and enabled pupils to reflect on the Christian response to the challenges of life. Pupils participated with respect, reverence and enthusiasm. There is an outside prayer area which is available for pupils at break times. Conversations with parents indicated that regular celebrations are a part of school life to which families are invited. They value these opportunities to join their children on their faith journey and are appreciative of the provision of a parents' prayer group during Lent.

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

Grade I

There is a very good understanding of the importance of service and support for those in need. The school encourages pupils to give time and energy to support local and national charities including CAFOD, Shelter and Crisis at Christmas. Pupils and families respond with great generosity despite living in an area of high deprivation. Conversations with pupils indicate that they understand the need to work for the common good and put others before themselves. Pupils learn to respect and value those from other cultures through very good relationships with local community schools. Pupils are given responsibilities through the School Council and other systems and are growing in their understanding that the call to justice and service is part of being a member of a Catholic 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 I*

Partnership is a central part of the school's understanding of itself with its immediate and wider community. The school works very closely with parents and carers who are very supportive of all that is done to enable their children to grow in faith and understanding. Some parents wrote praising the ethos of the school. One said, 'Since my daughter started at this school she has wanted us to pray before meals; she shares more, she respects our home. She loves this school' Parents appreciated the Breakfast Club and the very wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. Relationships with the local parish are excellent with some governors acting as catechists. There are also very good links with the diocese. The headteacher is secretary to the Tower Hamlets Catholic headteacher meetings which seeks to support and strengthen the Catholic presence in the borough. The school takes full advantage of training offered by the diocese and senior staff attend diocesan conferences.

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

Grade I*

The school is committed to the Church's mission in education and leadership is very effective. Headteacher, governors and senior staff ensure that the Catholic life of the school is central to all its work. Pupils are given many opportunities to know the life and teachings of Jesus and the traditions of the Catholic Church. Leaders share a vision of the nature of Catholic education and work with staff, pupils and families to move the school forward. All aspects of school life are underpinned by the Mission Statement, 'With Jesus beside us, we do our best' which is on display in every classroom and is well known by pupils. Each class has a prayer focus and an attractive display area which emphasises the importance of religious education. Governors have a wide range of expertise, visit frequently and make a significant contribution to the life of the school. They are well organised and have a clear understanding of their role in safeguarding and promoting the Catholic life of the school.

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school?

Since the last inspection a new prayer policy has introduced wider and more varied forms of worship. Pupils are given opportunities for reflection and meditation as well as increased opportunities to contribute to school and classroom liturgies. All staff have been very well supported as the school has implemented the new diocesan framework and requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The school has identified that it should continue to develop the liturgical and sacramental prayer life of the school linked to the Year of Faith.

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 is very effective in developing pupils' experience in the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing. The dedicated leadership and vision of the headteacher and religious education subject leader are instrumental in ensuring that worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and are well planned and resourced. Religious education is valued and recognised as the core of the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to reach their full potential academically, spiritually and morally by all staff. Links with parents, parish and diocese demonstrate the school's commitment to partnership and its clear identity as a diocesan Catholic school.