



# **The Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School**

2 Oakleigh Park South, Whetstone, London N20 9JU

Date of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014

## **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 very good. The curriculum is based on the delivery of the Curriculum Directory supported by the 'Year of Faith' units and 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' scheme of work. Pupils make very good progress in their subject knowledge of the Catholic faith through the challenge and expectation of their teachers. They have very positive attitudes to learning and appreciate the wide range of teaching methods used by staff. Attainment is very good and is in line with and sometimes exceeds diocesan expectations. Self-evaluation is up to date, accurate and illustrates a very good awareness of development areas for religious education. Very good leadership of religious education supports the setting of challenging targets for pupils and provides opportunities for new staff to see outstanding teaching. There are very good systems in place for monitoring all aspects of teaching and learning as well as regular participation in deanery and diocesan moderation.

## **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 is outstanding in its effectiveness in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing. The vision of the headteacher, school leadership and governors, supported by local clergy, are instrumental in ensuring that worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and are well planned and resourced. The celebration of the Eucharist and Reconciliation are offered at key times of the year with pupils' participation in the preparation. Religious education is valued and recognised as the core of the curriculum and is given a very good range of resources which are under constant review and in the process of being extended. Pupils have a very good understanding of the social teaching of the Church. They have very many opportunities to develop personal responsibility and engage in action to support those in need locally and in the wider world. There is an appreciation of being part of the local deanery and diocese of Westminster. Governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school. They have a high level of expertise and fully understand their role as governors of a diocesan Catholic school.

## 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 eleven lessons and one assembly, and carried out seven 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, Whetstone 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 Doogan	Associate Inspector

## Description of School

The school is a two form entry in the LA of Barnet and the locality of Whetstone. The school serves the parish of St Mary Magdalen, Whetstone with some pupils coming from adjoining parishes. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 100%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 68%.

There are 420 pupils on roll. There are 5 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is below average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well below average. There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Thirty two pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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Headteacher:	Mrs C A McMahon
Chair of Governors:	Mr K O'Callaghan

Date of previous inspection:	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2009
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## Key for inspection grades:

<i>Grade 1*</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Very Good</i>
<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>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?**

There were two areas for development identified in the last inspection. Both have been addressed. The first was linked to the further development of assessment. In recent years the school has put in place a thorough review of assessment in the light of the agreed understanding of levels of attainment and the new Curriculum Directory. The second was to provide more opportunities for the use of information and communication technology in religious education lessons. This is now a feature of many lessons with a good range of resources available for staff and pupils. In addition a systematic programme of monitoring of all aspects of teaching and learning has led to high aspirations for staff and pupils. Self-assessment for older pupils has resulted in an awareness of the steps needed for further improvement.

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

**Grade 1**

The content of curriculum religious education meets all the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. It is creative, engaging and meets learning needs. The programmes of study which incorporate the diocesan 'Year of Faith' materials provide a systematic study of the life and teachings of Jesus and the relationship between life and faith. Resources are used creatively to ensure the provision of an interesting and challenging curriculum. Medium term planning illustrates how the content of the Curriculum Directory is studied across the key stages. There is much evidence to show progression and depth of provision.

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

**Grade 1**

Pupil achievement, attainment and progress in religious education are very good. Pupils' attainment is recorded and progress tracked in line with other core subjects. This process highlights any pupils who are not making expected progress so that supportive remedial action can quickly be put in place. In all classes observed, pupils were interested, engaged and keen to make good progress. Older pupils have a good understanding of the levels of attainment and respond well to suggestions made by teachers on how to improve their work. The school makes very good provision for all groups of pupils and has identified the need to ensure that higher order questioning is a feature of lessons to enable pupils to reach their potential in regard to levels of attainment. Pupils spoken to said they enjoyed the variety of activities engaged in during religious education lessons and the opportunities given to self-assess. One said, 'the teachers are enthusiastic and make it fun; they help you to understand the bible by putting it into real life.' Their books are very well presented and give evidence of a very good understanding and knowledge of religion and an ability to reflect on meaning. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils reach or exceed diocesan expectations.

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade 1**

The quality of teaching is very good as evidenced by the outcomes for pupils. During the inspection lessons observed were good or better. Pupils were engaged and enthusiastic as teachers used open ended questioning, discussions with talk partners and an interesting selection of tasks and resources to deepen pupils' learning. In a Year 6 lesson which focused on the cardinal virtues, pupils were asked to write about how a Christian might behave during Lent and how this might differ from a non-believer. This involved a discussion of sources of revelation including scripture, traditions of the Church and personal experience. In most lessons observed, assessment opportunities took place, the pace was lively and teaching strategies varied to meet pupils' needs. Evidence from conversations with individual pupils, members of the school council, workbook scrutiny and monitoring and planning files indicated very good practice. There were some very good examples of high standards of effective marking and feedback to pupils indicating the next steps to take to improve. Support for new teachers from the subject leader and headteacher is very good. All teachers have high expectations of behaviour; good subject knowledge well differentiated planning and creative delivery.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 1**

The leadership and management of religious education is very good. The acting subject leader has continued the work of the experienced subject leader who has been on secondment. Together with the headteacher and deputy head they share their vision for excellence with all staff and are well supported by the whole school community, including the knowledgeable and effective governing body. The good systems in place to regularly monitor, track and ensure pupil progress have enabled leaders to support new staff and ensure high standards are maintained. The acting subject leader has organised a series of moderation sessions for the deanery to develop teachers' confidence in accurately assessing pupils' work. He has a very good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education. The school improvement plan clearly identifies issues for action and evaluates current provision. The link governor for religious education is active in the life of the school and familiar with current developments in religious education. This enables him to support the school effectively.

## **What should the school do to improve further in classroom religious education?**

- Continue to develop high order thinking skills as they relate to religious education.
- Develop assessment strategies and tracking across Attainment Target 2 in religious education.

## **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?**

Since the last inspection there has been much input into teachers' theological knowledge and understanding to improve religious education and enhance the Catholic life of the school. The theology underpinning Catholic social teaching has been emphasised to enable pupils to reflect on the significance of the Common Good. All staff have been well supported as they implement the new Diocesan Framework and the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Parish links have been developed in recent years. The priest from the local parish is now on the governing body and is a frequent visitor to the school.

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

**Grade I\***

Religious education receives at least 10% curriculum time and has a similar budget to other core subjects. Resources are very good and are constantly reviewed and replaced when necessary. The learning environment is outstanding with attractive classroom displays and prayer tables which reflect the Church's year and are used as a focus during classroom liturgies. School leadership, including well informed governors, offer very good support in developing and reviewing the quality of religious education. All staff receive regular in-service support and training related to the Catholic life of the school. Governors play a major role and are involved in self-evaluation and the school improvement plan. The priest from the local parish liaises with the school for a planned programme of Masses and liturgies. He also acts as an additional teaching resource on his visits to classes.

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

**Grade I\***

The school's provision for prayer and worship is outstanding and a key part of every school celebration. Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school through class prayer times and assemblies. In addition, pupils are given frequent opportunities for spiritual development through meditation and reflection. Pupils are often engaged in the planning and preparation of worship through writing their own prayers particularly for the regular class masses. The newly formed liturgy group has begun to plan and prepare celebrations and look forward to developing this role. Mass is celebrated in school when possible. Restricted space in school has led to the parish church being used more frequently and Key Stage 2 classes attend weekday mass on a rota basis. Pupils also visit the Church to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions and practice. The priest from the local parish visits regularly to talk to classes and prepare liturgies. Recently he led an Ash Wednesday liturgy and enabled all Key Stage 2 pupils to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent. Parents and families are invited to masses and class assemblies when space allows and appreciate the opportunity this gives them to become involved in the prayer life of their children and the school. During the inspection a large number of parents were present for a Year 5 St Patrick's Day assembly

which included prayers written by the pupils, role play and Irish dancing. Families also receive the 'Wednesday Word' which is used as the basis for class worship.

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

**Grade I\***

The school is a welcoming community which recognises the gifts and uniqueness of each individual. Pupils are encouraged to share their gifts with others in acts of service to the school through well established systems including the school council and peer mediators. A wide range of charities chosen by pupils include support for a food bank, a local hospice and Cafod. Frequent visits are made to and received from a local special school and pupils also visit a care home for elderly people for carol singing. Conversations with pupils indicate that they have a very good understanding of the theology underpinning their support for people in need. Older pupils also have a good grasp of moral issues in society. They are familiar with the ethics of the market place through involvement in Fairtrade activities and the promotion of fairly traded products throughout the school. The school offers an excellent range of extra-curricular activities to support the interests and gifts of pupils. Participation in local and national events, including sports activities, also offer involvement in the wider world. The school ensures that pupils understand the call to justice and a sense of service are essential parts of their Catholic identity.

### **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 between parents, school and parish is very effective and seen by governors and leadership as an essential part of the being a diocesan school. Parish links are very good with the priest from the local parish being on the governing body and actively engaged in the life of the school. Class masses and informal visits help pupils and parents to see the Church as a vital part of school life as does the involvement of the link governor. The school works closely with parents and families and keeps them well informed through newsletters, questionnaires, curriculum meetings and consultations. The school welcomes parental participation and actively seeks to communicate a shared understanding of the mission of the school. There is a very high level of attendance at assemblies and liturgies. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision offered by the school. Many thoughtful and appreciative comments were made on the diocesan questionnaires including, 'Religious education is fundamental to the teaching approach and is included in all school activities. Every week my child brings home the 'Wednesday Word' which we all enjoy reading together.' Links with the diocese are very good. Senior leaders and governors attend diocesan conferences, in-service and courses offered by Westminster Education Service. The acting subject leader has initiated a series of deanery meetings to share expertise with other diocesan schools. He is also working with deanery schools to produce a booklet of examples to support moderation. The headteacher is an associate inspector for religious education and has attended diocesan training for this.

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

**Grade I\***

Leadership is outstanding. Headteacher, governors and senior staff are fully committed to the Church's mission in education. They demonstrate this by providing a curriculum with spiritual and moral education at its heart. Catholic life is central to the work of the school and leaders ensure that all aspects reflect the richness of a Christian way of life. The headteacher ensures that all staff have the skills and opportunities to contribute to the Catholic life of the school and there are excellent systems in place to induct and support new teachers. Pupils are given every opportunity to know the life and teachings of Jesus and the traditions of the Catholic Church. Governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school. They have a high level of expertise and fully understand their role as governors of a diocesan Catholic school.

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

- Continue to provide pupils with additional opportunities to plan and prepare liturgies.
- Continue to work to achieve 'Fair Trade' status.
- Investigate links across schools in this country and abroad to develop understanding of the needs of others and of our place in the world.