



Diocese of Westminster

St Mary Magdalen Catholic Junior School

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DFE Number: 304 3505

URN Number: 101542

Headteacher: Ms M Nowicka

Chair of Governors: Mrs R Wilson

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: 11th March 2013

Date of previous inspection: 26th March 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

Associate Inspector: Mr D. Keane

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 twelve lessons, 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 St Mary Magdalen Catholic Junior School, Willesden Green 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 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.

Description of School

The school is a three form entry junior school in Willesden Green in the Local Authority of Brent. The school serves the parish of the same name with a smaller number of pupils coming from the neighbouring parish of the Transfiguration in Kensal Rise. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 83%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 7% and from other Faiths 1%.

There are 353 pupils on roll, with 11 pupils with a statement of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is also well above average. There is an average rate of families claiming free school meals.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Requires improvement;
Grade 4: Causing Concern.

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

Overall Grade: I

The overall effectiveness of curriculum religious education is very good and meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress are very good. Pupils make very good progress, know how to make improvements in their work, can talk about their faith and identify ways in which it affects their lives and relationships. Very 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. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and there are good structures in place to support new members of staff. The headteacher, supported by all staff gives the subject a high priority which permeates all aspects of the life of the school.

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

There were three areas for development in the last inspection report. These were to develop religious education assessment to track pupil progress more accurately and set targets, to ensure consistency of marking across the school and to monitor more formally classroom prayer sessions. The school has responded well and there is now a good tracking system which has enabled staff to set pupil targets and inform future planning. Marking is now more consistent and is monitored through regular book scrutinies. Classroom prayer sessions have also been monitored and good practice shared. In addition, a programme of training and regular meetings has enabled staff to share good practice and gain a better understanding of developments in religious education. To further improve curriculum religious education in the light of the new framework, the school should:

1. Continue to strengthen assessment for learning in religious education.
2. Continue the development of the new religious education subject leader.
3. Provide more bibles to enable all classes to have a full set.

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

Grade I

The content of curriculum religious education meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The four strands are used to very good effect and are clearly identified in lesson planning. The school is using the 'Year of Faith' units which are cross referenced to the area of the Curriculum Directory being covered. Staff are very well supported in their medium term planning which shows clear links to the Curriculum Directory and the resources used. There is regular monitoring of the curriculum, planning, workbooks and pupil learning. Visitors from other faiths support the learning in these areas and the parish priest visits frequently as an additional teaching resource.

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

Grade I

Pupil achievement, attainment and progress in religious education are very good. Pupils enter the school at around the national average and high standards for all groups are evident. This has been achieved by a significant investment in resources, training and good use of support staff. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards meet and sometimes exceed diocesan expectations in relation to the levels of attainment. Lessons observed provided evidence of well motivated pupils who are actively engaged in their own learning. There is evidence that pupils are attaining a very good standard in knowledge and understanding of religion and are developing an ability to reflect on meaning.

The quality of teaching

Grade I

The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons observed across the school during the inspection gave evidence of high teacher expectations for all groups. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and use a variety of strategies to engage the full range of ability. Thirteen teachers hold the CCRS certificate or equivalent and have good access to in-service training. Pupils make very 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 opportunities to develop new skills and build on previous learning. Workbooks are very well presented, marking is positive and interactive with targets set for further improvement. Regular monitoring of teaching is in place followed by discussion and support as necessary. Good assessment procedures have enabled teachers to plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. Parents are able to support their children's learning through regular curriculum newsletters.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade I

The leadership and management of religious education are very good and have a positive impact on the life of the school. The new subject leader is very well supported by the headteacher, deputy and all staff. Together they ensure that clear vision and direction for religious education is shared by the whole school community. School leaders ensure that very good support is given to new teachers and teaching assistants. High expectations for staff and pupils ensure that religious education is at the core of the curriculum. Staff are very well supported in their teaching through in-service training and frequent continued professional development. There is a good range of resources and the learning environment for religious education is very good. Religious education is given priority in the school improvement plan. Members of the governing body shows a high level of commitment to training which has enabled it to become familiar with current developments in religious education.

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 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 leadership and vision of the headteacher, deputy 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. Their behaviour is very good. The governing body includes members with a wide range of expertise who are able to contribute to the school's vision of itself as a Catholic community. Good links with parents, parish and Diocese demonstrate the school's commitment to partnership and its clear identity as a diocesan Catholic 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 the school has moved into new premises which has enabled it to continue to provide an environment where each child flourishes. Led by the headteacher and deputy, the whole school community has reviewed the Mission Statement and updated it to reflect the vision and values of the school. Pupils have been given increased opportunities for reflection and meditation as well as more occasions where they can contribute to school and classroom liturgies. All staff have been well supported as the school implements the new Diocesan Framework and the requirements of the Curriculum Directory.

The school has identified that it should continue to strengthen pupils' active participation in the planning and preparation of worship and provide further opportunities for spiritual growth, and also to develop those areas identified for development in the section on religious education

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

Grade I

Religious education receives 10% of curriculum time and this year has a larger budget than English. Resources are very good and teaching assistants play a significant role in supporting pupils. There is a good learning environment through topical displays in classrooms and other areas of the school. All staff receive in-service support and training relating to the Catholic life of the school. Governors are now able to provide support in reviewing and developing the place of religious education. The priest from the local parish is a support for new teachers in developing the subject knowledge necessary for effective teaching of religious education. He is a frequent visitor to the school for a planned programme of masses and liturgies. He also acts as chaplain and as an additional learning resource. The school funds annual retreat days for pupils in Years 3 and 6.

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

The school's provision for prayer and worship is very good. Pupils are given many opportunities for prayer, meditation and reflection and examples were seen during the inspection. Religious education lessons generally include prayers and sometimes include a simple liturgy. Parish led sacramental preparation takes place on the school premises and is given good support by staff. Pupils are given a wide experience of prayer and worship within Catholic traditions. They have begun to be engaged in the preparation of liturgies and masses which are part of the school's provision. Pupils' spiritual development is nurtured through religious education which permeates the wider life of the school as well as liturgies and worship. The concept and meaning of the cross was explored during a powerful whole school assembly attended during the inspection, and led by the deputy headteacher. Pupils played a major role in interpreting the parable of the Prodigal Son and participated with respect, reverence and enthusiasm. Pupils join the parish at St Mary Magdalen for key events in the liturgical year and take the lead through readings, prayers as servers and singing. Year 5 pupils led an hour of 'Quantore', 40 hours of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in the parish church. Comments on the parental questionnaire were very positive about invitations to masses, liturgies and other school celebrations. Parents and families welcome the opportunities to support their children on their faith journey.

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

Grade I

St Mary Magdalen has taken on many of the ideas from the 'Rights Respecting Schools' initiative, where pupils are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the area of social justice. The school celebrates the diversity of its cultural heritage through participation in 'Black History Month,' and an international evening. Pupils are actively involved in support for local and national charities including Cafod and the Catholic Children's Society as well as carol singing in the local community and providing Christmas hampers for elderly parishioners. Conversations with pupils indicate that the need to work for the common good and put others before themselves is rooted in gospel values. Pupils learn to respect and value those from other faiths and cultures through assemblies and visits. Pupils are given responsibilities through the school council to serve the community and are growing in their understanding that responding to 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

Governors, headteacher and staff see partnership between parents, school and parish as a central part of the school's understanding of itself with its immediate and wider community. Parish links are excellent and pupils visit the church frequently to deepen their faith and understanding. Older parishioners are invited to school Christmas and summer performances. Year 3 pupils join with those in Year 2 from the Infants school, for the May Procession. The school works very closely with parents and carers who are appreciative of all that is done to enable their children to grow in faith and understanding. Some parents wrote comments praising the ethos of the school. There are also very good links with the Diocese through participation in training offered through the Education

Service for both staff and governors. Senior staff attend diocesan conferences and have participated in local and diocesan moderation sessions. In addition pupils attend the Carol Service and Good Shepherd Mass held at Westminster Cathedral.

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

Grade 1

The leadership of the school is committed to the Church's mission in education and demonstrates this by providing a curriculum with spiritual and moral development at its heart. Headteacher, subject leader, governors and senior staff together with the parish priest 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, which is reviewed by the whole school community each year, is on display in every classroom and is known by pupils. Each class has an attractive prayer focus and a display area which emphasises the importance of religious education. Governors have a wide range of expertise 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.



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A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 1

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

Grade 1

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

Grade 1

The quality of teaching

Grade 1

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

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 1

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

Grade 1

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

Grade 1

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

Grade 1

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

Grade 1