

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School



Clover Way, Gadebridge Road, Hemel Hempstead HPI 3EA

Date of inspection: 3 June 2015

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 2

Overall, the effectiveness of classroom religious education is good. The quality of teaching is good overall. It generally engages pupils well in their learning and as a result, they make good progress in acquiring religious literacy. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and try to do their best. Staff have regular opportunities to participate in regular training events both within the diocese, and in school. These are much appreciated by staff and supported well by the good leadership and management of religious education. The new RE coordinator together with the deputy headteacher, have worked well to introduce a new programme of lessons in RE. It is carefully linked to the Curriculum Directory and the 'Composite Model'. The quality of learning in lessons and the rates of pupils' progress in religious education are monitored regularly, and follow similar procedures as those used for core subjects. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and feel valued. The school is striving to ensure that the most able pupils achieve as well as they can through a variety of strategies. The headteacher and governors are passionate about the school and have a very good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Religious education contributes well to the Catholic 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 1

Pupils benefit from the excellent Catholic education they receive. Staff, governors, parents and pupils know that religious education is at the heart of school life and that the school is committed to the Church's education mission. Worship and prayer are central to everyday activities, and the regular use of the prayer corner located in the hall, highlights this. Links with the parishes and the local clergy are strong. Parish clergy are closely involved with the celebration of the liturgy in the school as well as on special occasions. Partnership with the diocese is excellent. Pupils flourish at St Cuthbert Mayne, not only in their personal development, but also in their understanding of the Church's teaching on social justice. Charities and projects in the community mean that children gain first-hand experience of helping others. Leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, are committed to excellence in developing the school's Catholic life. Those who are not Catholics willingly uphold the teachings of the Church and are very well supported by senior leaders and the RE coordinator. Parents and governors have a clear understanding of the school's Catholic life. Self-evaluation of the Catholic life of the school is a little cautious and does not fully reflect its strengths.

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 eight lessons, a whole school act of worship, end of day prayers, carried out one learning walk and eight interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, the scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic School, Hemel Hempstead 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

David Scott	Lead Inspector
Nancy Conoboy	Associate Inspector
Daniel Keane	Associate Inspector

Description of School

St Cuthbert Mayne is a two-form entry Catholic Junior School in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Dacorum. The school serves families from the parishes of SS Mary & Joseph, Boxmoor, St. Marks, Warners End, Church of the Resurrection, Grovhill, Our Lady Queen of all Creation, Adeyfield and Our Lady Mother of the Saviour, Chipperfield. It also takes pupils from Bedfordshire.

The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 97%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is approximately 80%. There are 239 pupils on roll, with no pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHC). The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well below average. Thirty three pupils are eligible for the pupil premium grant which is below average with the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals being well below average.

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DFE Number:	919 3386
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Headteacher:	Bernadette Quinn
Chair of Governors:	Jane Gonzalez

Date of previous inspection:	2010
Previous Inspection grades:	Outstanding

Key for inspection grades:	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</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?

The last Diocesan inspection report identified just one improvement point in relation to classroom religious education: 'As identified in the Improvement Plan the school should identify the relevant levels of attainment in the differentiated tasks to enable pupils to achieve the appropriate level'. A new programme of lessons has been introduced from September 2014 and there is regular moderation of attainment both at diocesan and deanery level. Assessment is fully integrated into the teaching programme and teacher confidence in levelling RE is now well developed in line with the 'Agreed Understandings'. Further refining and fine tuning on assessment practice is on-going.

In addition, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, Chair of Governors, RE Coordinator and staff have attended Diocesan training events, including inspection updates. A handbook to support teachers in the teaching of RE has been updated to reflect the new scheme.

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

Grade 2

A new programme of lessons, based on the published scheme, 'Come and See', was introduced in September 2014, and meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Through effective training and development the RE coordinator and teaching staff have ensured that lesson planning is carefully cross-referenced to the Curriculum Directory. In addition, the school also follows the 'Composite Model' which provides systematic coverage of the Curriculum Directory. Learning resources are linked to the scheme's website and contain useful video clips and powerpoint presentations. Lesson planning is carefully orchestrated to support pupils' needs as they move through the school. Nevertheless, it recognises that there is more work to do to make sure staff are confident and understand what is required.

Links with other faiths include Hinduism, Islamism, Judaism, and Sikhism, and are woven well into the schemes of work and supported through visits to places of worship. For example, Year 5 pupils had previously enjoyed participating in a Seder meal. There are also regular exchanges with pupils in non-Catholic schools, and through visiting speakers from different faiths. They also link with those from other Christian traditions.

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

Grade 2

Pupils' achievement is good. By the end of Year 6 their attainment in religious education although comparable, is slightly under that of other core subjects. Also, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 is significantly lower, when compared with other core subjects. This is mainly due to teachers being overly cautious and having high expectations in judging when AT Li is secure. Further training is planned to ensure staff have the expertise and confidence to assessing pupils' skills, particularly in this area.

Pupils' work is both internally and externally moderated. End of unit assessments are levelled in line with the agreed understanding of diocesan attainment levels. As with English and mathematics, these outcomes are entered into the whole-school tracking system for all year groups.

The deputy headteacher and RE coordinator conduct work scrutiny each term. Here they check the consistency of aspects such as the quality of presentation, extended writing, display and marking that are used to improve teachers' practice. However, the work and assessment tasks for the most able pupils do not always allow them to demonstrate their performance to the best of their ability. Pupils mostly have a good grasp of the language associated with the liturgy. Year 3 were at ease, for example, in talking about the story of the Prodigal Son and had a good understanding of the specialist vocabulary and Year 6 had an effective grasp of the religious language associated with the two accounts of blind Bartimeus.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

The quality of teaching is good. Evidence in pupils' books and their responses in class, show that they make securely good progress over time. Teachers have good RE subject knowledge, and plan activities that encourage pupils to use the bible and to reflect on passages of scripture in all classes. Pupils are given regular feedback both orally and in marking. However, not all teachers provide pupils with clear advice on how to improve their work and sufficient opportunities to act on this advice.

The pace and challenge set in most classes was mainly good. Pupils were confident to ask questions in class. However, teachers' questioning is not always sufficiently thorough to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly for the most able. Also, activities are not always well matched to pupils' abilities and as a result, not all pupils achieve as well as they should. Lessons are based on the new programme of lessons for RE and are closely linked to the Curriculum Directory. Stimulating resources help to inspire pupils to learn well. For example, music was used to aid reflection. In all classes there was a calm, positive climate for learning where behaviour for learning was never less than good. Pupils were eager to learn and commented that they do enjoy their RE lessons.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

Leadership and management of religious education are good. Religious education is currently led by the deputy headteacher and RE coordinator, who together with the headteacher, have a clear vision of how to develop this Catholic school. The appointment and successful induction of the new RE coordinator has ensured continuity of the strong vision for the teaching of religious education.

The school's mission statement, 'Learning together and striving for excellence in the name of Christ' demonstrates its deep commitment to the Church's educational mission. Systems and procedures are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure staff training and development needs are met. The school's self-evaluation of the success of curriculum religious education is accurate but would benefit from some additional well-chosen examples to give full credit to the impact of its work.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and RE coordinator have observed all teachers and have given feedback and highlighted improvement points. In addition, staff regularly observe one another teach.

The new RE coordinator has attended training on the introduction of the new scheme, 'Come and See'. In addition, he has attended the Diocesan moderation sessions and a seminar led by Dr Margaret Carswell about St Mark's Gospel and the 'Composite Model'. One in five teachers is not catholic and they are well supported in the delivery of religious education lessons by being teamed-up with experienced Catholic teachers for mutual support and joint planning sessions.

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

- Improve the teaching and learning still further by ensuring teachers:
 - provide activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities
 - use of questioning is sufficiently thorough to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly for the most able
 - provide pupils with clearer advice on how to improve their work and provide more opportunities to act on this advice.

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, the school has continued to work assiduously to promote its Catholic life. It has continued to develop its partnerships with other faith groups, the parishes and with parents.

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

Grade I

Religious education is given high priority within the curriculum and is allocated 10% of the total available curriculum time. During the last financial year the budget for religious education was almost 25% higher than that provided for core subjects. The rationale for this additional funding was to support the introduction of the new scheme 'Come and See' and to train teachers in its delivery.

The creation of a Catholic ethos around the site is exceptionally successful. Governors are readily accessible to parents and know their views well. They spoke passionately about enabling the 'tin of faith' to be opened so that all pupils could realise their full potential. Governors work closely with leaders to develop and review the quality of pupils' religious experience and are keenly aware of areas for further development. They show great care and concern by firmly believing that all staff and pupils should be treated equally and fairly and on every agenda of the full governing body the well-being of staff is regularly discussed.

The openness and warmth of staff is a real strength of the school. During the inspection one student undertaking work experience at St Cuthbert's, from a nearby Catholic secondary school, commented, 'teaching here has inspired me to want to be a teacher myself'.

There are excellent links with the parishes and community working together and this is very strong. Some staff have undertaken special courses in their parishes in order to deepen their understanding of RE and scripture. Those who are not Catholics willingly uphold the teachings of the Church and are very well supported by senior leaders and the RE coordinator.

Parents appreciate greatly the school's work as seen in the questionnaire reviewed during the inspection. Open mornings and afternoons and events such as 'Be Spirited' ensure they make a positive contribution to the Catholic life of the school. For example, one parent governor supported Year 6 pupils by accompanying them on their recent visit to the Isle of Wight.

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

Grade I

The school's provision for prayer, collective worship and liturgy is outstanding. At regular points in the day pupils are given the opportunity to pray together in class or as a community. To aid prayer and reflection, each classroom is equipped with a prayer table as a focal point designed to complement the topic being delivered within RE.

Pupils are able to experience a wide variety of prayer, including the option to write their own prayers, sing grace and offer spontaneous petitions. In addition, in the school hall there is a prayer

corner which pupils are encouraged to use independently when the need arises. As inspectors observed during the whole school act of worship and end of day prayers, pupils conduct themselves in a respectful fashion and value the time for spiritual development. Pupils were fulsome in their praise of the 'Be Spirited' week and enjoyed concentrating on Holy Week in such detail. The 'prayer station' and 'mandala' activities were highlighted by pupils as being "really fun and interesting". Mass is celebrated regularly in school by the parish priests and is well attended by both parents and local parishioners. Pupils both prepare and take part in class Masses, where appropriate act as Altar Servers and Year 6 distribute ashes on Ash Wednesday. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also celebrated in Lent and Year 3 pupils prior to their Holy Communion take part in the 'Celebration of Light' service.

Staff pray together at every meeting and new staff are effectively mentored on the nature and importance of Catholic worship. Prayer and liturgy are monitored regularly. However, there is scope for the formal monitoring and evaluation the liturgical life of the school to be strengthened still further. The strong links with the two members of the local clergy from the parishes served by the school ensure a strong sacramental life and opportunities for liturgical formation. An exceptional display in the hall of pupils' homework based on their favourite stories from scripture demonstrated not only breadth of choice and but also a wealth of creative medium ranging from beautifully illustrated text to 3D models using plastic bricks.

A dedicated team of music teachers ensures that there is a good repertoire of liturgical music to enhance prayer and worship. This exemplifies how the school is very successful in making sure its Catholic ethos permeates aspects of its academic work outside of classroom religious education. There is a wide range of religious artefacts on display throughout the school, both in class prayer areas and in public areas. These make St Cuthbert Mayne's very visibly a Catholic school. Although there are very few pupils from other faiths within the school, it works very hard to ensure there are well-considered links to allow children to experience other traditions.

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

Grade 1

The school displays an outstanding commitment to the Common Good and a very real understanding of the theology underpinning Catholic social teaching. The pupils are enthusiastic about fund raising for a wide variety of charities and can cite scripture in support of their actions. This year the school have promoted and collected for a number of charities, including Macmillan, Comic Relief, CAFOD and Age Concern and Dens. Pupils understand that faith has to be lived and to that end respond by serving the local, national and global community.

Pupils spoke warmly about the school and are proud to belong to the community. They spoke articulately about the importance of good relationships and the merits of working together. Year 6 enjoy the responsibilities of being part of the upper school and the School Council plays a valuable role in providing leadership opportunities and serving as the pupil voice.

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

Partnerships with the diocese, with the local parishes and with parents are excellent. They play a key part of the school's understanding of itself and of its immediate and wider community. Parents are fully supportive of the school as demonstrated by the very positive response to the parental questionnaire. Typical comments were: 'my child really enjoys RE', and 'the Be Spirited week was a

real triumph'. Parents are actively encouraged to attend school events and the headteacher operates an 'open-door' policy where they are free to speak about their child's progress and well-being and any other aspect of school life.

The school has a strong sense of its ecclesial identity through the links with local Catholic schools and the regular deputy headteachers' and RE coordinators' meetings. These also provide training opportunities and the chance to share expertise. Staff attend regularly all diocesan events. Governors are thoroughly involved in the life of the school and parish and have a very good understanding of parents' needs and views of the school.

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

Grade 1

Excellent leadership of this Catholic school is demonstrated by the outstanding commitment of leaders to the Church's mission in promoting an outstanding Catholic ethos of the school. The introduction of a new programme of RE lessons together with the high priority afforded to the monitoring of teaching and children's learning, make a strong contribution to the development of the pupils' spiritual life. New staff are very well inducted into its Catholic ethos and existing staff are given many opportunities for training and development. Stimulating visits and activities encourage pupils' understanding of the faith and traditions of those other than their own. Governors are passionate in their drive to improve the school in all ways, including its Catholic identity.

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

- Strengthen systems still further for the formal monitoring and evaluation of the liturgical life of the school.