



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Primary School**

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URN: 123858

Headteacher: Mrs Alison Fishlock

Chair of Governors: Mr Brian Matthews

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Date of inspection: 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> September 2013  
Date of previous inspection:  
Reporting Inspector: Mrs A Fowler

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## **Description of School**

Our Lady's is a smaller than average Catholic Primary school which draws the majority of its intake from the parish and the immediate area. There are five mixed-age classes which change from year to year as group sizes change.

A broadly average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families.

There are an above average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is also above average. At present approximately a third of the pupils within the school are baptised Catholics.

### **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

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## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 3**

Our Lady's school provides a satisfactory Catholic education for its pupils. Pupils and parents value the school and feel welcomed within the community. Most parents actively choose the school both for its Catholic identity and family feel. One parent saying; "Whilst I am not a Catholic I felt that a Catholic school would instill good values in my children". Another parent commented; "Staff are always welcoming, kind and helpful". Pupils like coming to school and feel valued. The behaviour of the pupils' is generally very good. Pupils respond well to the needs of each other and the wider community. However RE lessons need to be planned and delivered with a greater degree of challenge to raise standards of attainment and achievement, and the accuracy of pupil progress needs to be strengthened. Although the mission of the school is shared with pupils the opportunities to for pupils to take on a leadership role in the Catholic Life of the school including that of the prayer life are limited.

## **How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?**

**Grade 3**

Pupils are proud of their school and regard it as a safe and welcoming place. They are keen to participate and take responsibility when given the opportunity. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and are aware of the needs of others outside the school community. Pupils believe that there is very little bullying in the school, but if it does take place staff deal with it effectively. Through their involvement in charity work they demonstrate their commitment to justice. They talked positively about their experiences of supporting charities like Cafod and Mary's Meals and believed that it was important to

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support those less fortunate than themselves. All of the pupils encountered during the inspection were able to express their own views with confidence and felt that the school valued them as individuals. Pupils believed they were given opportunities to take responsibility and cited the school council as an example but would welcome more opportunities.. In describing the distinctive nature of the school the pupils were able to talk about the physical expression of Catholicism, (statues, prayer areas, going to mass) but were less able to talk about the link between faith and actions.

Pupils' response to the prayer life of the school was reverent with all pupils joining in prayers. Pupils have knowledge of the Church's year and through taking part in events like the May procession or the Christmas play their understanding is being developed. The school takes part in the parish mass on a Friday and the pupils welcomed this opportunity to visit the church. They also said that the way the priest celebrated the mass and the fact that he explained his words and actions as he was going along help them develop their understanding of the liturgy. They are respectful of difference and understand that others do not hold the same beliefs as they do. Individual class reflections take place and all classrooms have a focal area for prayer. It was noticeable however that pupils' involvement in the planning of prayer and worship was extremely limited. In one class pupils were encouraged to design the focal area themselves and explained why they had made the choices they had however the majority of leadership and initiative within the prayer life of the school comes from the adults. This limits pupils' opportunity both to develop their own skills and also reflect on their own understanding.

Pupils respond positively to their experiences in religious education particularly when there are opportunities for them to engage in drama or other creative tasks. All pupils whatever their background felt included in the RE lessons. They are interested and enthusiastic about their learning. However, the level of challenge and the selection of tasks do not always allow pupils to demonstrate what they are capable of or respond in a way which encourages theological literacy. They lack both the confidence and ability to improve their own work. Although they know many scripture stories they do not always reflect on their meaning in the context of life today. This limits their opportunities to make connections between faith and life.

## **How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?**

**Grade 3**

The Headteacher aims to make prayer central to the life of the school and is well supported by the Parish Priest. Opportunities are provided to celebrate the liturgical year, with special services in Advent, Lent and May for example. These events help develop pupils' understanding and also strengthen the connection between school and parish. For those pupils to whom it is appropriate, opportunities are offered to experience the sacrament of reconciliation; Mass is celebrated with different year groups on a weekly basis as well as whole school Masses. Focal areas for prayer are present in all classrooms but in some cases these need to be further developed and given an interactive dimension. There is a prayer room within the school but owing to its position up a steep flight of stairs pupils are unable to visit without adult supervision. Pupils are not at present encouraged to lead prayer and worship though the school has plans to ensure this happens in the future. The school is at present extremely well supported by the Parish priest who plays an active role within the school; the school however needs to re-examine its links with the parish and consider how further encouragement might be given to both parents and parishioners to

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play a greater role in supporting prayer and worship within the school. Some consideration might also be given to developing a retreat programme for pupils.

The Bishops' Conference requirements for the time allocated to RE are fulfilled. The syllabus has recently been re-evaluated and the school has made the decision to change to a new syllabus 'God Matters'. Evidence seen related to the use of the previous scheme of work would indicate that there was insufficient progression of learning and lack of detail. Teachers planning and understanding of intended outcomes of God Matters is in its early stages which currently impacts upon pupils ability to talk knowledgeably about their learning and how to improve in their work. Tasks themselves are often on the lines of retelling a story which means that pupils are insufficiently challenged. As identified by the school improvements in teachers own theological knowledge would support them being able to provide a greater degree of challenge. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Marking is not as effective as it could be as comments are not focused on RE thereby not encouraging pupils to improve their own work. This has already been identified by the school as a priority area for development. Where lessons were at their best teachers quickly encouraged groups to begin tasks, were clear about the intended outcomes, set a brisk pace and provided a variety of stimuli. Most lessons included some differentiation with support staff being deployed to support outcomes. Pupils who had special educational needs were well supported. A relationship programme incorporating sex education is in place and is at present being reviewed.

## **How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic Life of the school?**

**Grade 3**

The leadership of the school is currently limited as a result of the recent retirement of the deputy and the school being in the process of recruitment. The Headteacher demonstrates and models through her own actions the values that she believes are important. The self-assessment of the school is extremely accurate and the Headteacher is fully aware of the strengths and current priorities of the school. At present the Headteacher also leads RE and takes responsibility for prayer and worship. This work load is unsustainable placing too great a demand on one individual. Parents expressed the view that the school is a welcoming place that supports their own values with one parent saying "the school has a small family feel which teaches the importance of respect and care" and another "the school has a great community atmosphere". Relationships between the school and parish Priest are good. The school creates an environment in which all pupils are known, feel secure and safe and part of a family. Monitoring and evaluation procedures of both the Catholic life of the school and specifically of academic Religious Education are only in the planning stages and therefore at present make no impact on the life of the school.

The governing body are known to both pupils and staff. They are aware that roles and responsibilities within the school need to be reviewed as a priority in order to increase the pace of improvement and drive outcomes forward. They are also aware that in the past they offered insufficient challenge to the head and senior leadership team and are taking steps to ensure that their own skills are being improved. They should ensure that this training also encompasses evaluating the Catholic life of the school.

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Within the school pupils are actively encouraged to support a variety of charities both at local and international level, including Cafod. There is a sense of inclusiveness within the school community with support for those who face difficulties.

Pupils are given opportunities to appreciate and celebrate each other's accomplishments and gain an understanding of different faiths and cultures through the RE programme and through other activities the school takes part in. The school engages with and works in partnership with the diocese.

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop**

**Grade 3**

- Pupils are a strength of the school. They fully support the school, wish to succeed and are willing to take responsibility
- The leadership of the Headteacher is a strength of the school with the Head having an accurate picture of the areas for development. However the leadership structure of the school is such that it places too much emphasis on one individual and therefore needs to be reviewed.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school by governors is not yet sufficiently robust.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop strategies to enable pupils to take greater responsibility in planning and leading the prayer life of the school.
- Ensure that staff plan RE effectively with reference to the levels of attainment and provide greater challenge for pupils thereby raising pupil achievement and attainment.
- Ensure assessment in RE, especially assessment for learning, is embedded into planning.
- Governors should seek to reduce the workload of the Head and ensure another member of staff is able to take on the role of RE Coordinator.
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The school will be re-inspected in the academic year beginning September 2014.