



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. NICHOLAS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

LIVERPOOL

Inspection Date 24th May 2018

Inspectors Mrs. Denise Hegarty, Mrs. Joanne Farrimond

Unique Reference Number 104657

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

Type of School Catholic Primary

Age range of pupils 3 - 11

Number on roll 172

Chair of Governors Mr. Con Buckley

Headteacher Mr. Martin Davies

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Date of last inspection 4th December 2012

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- St Nicholas' School is a slightly smaller than average sized Catholic primary school situated in the Liverpool area of the Archdiocese, serving the parish of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, although many pupils come from a wider catchment area.
- There are 172 children on roll of whom 47 are baptised Catholic, 13 come from other Christian denominations, 84 are of another faith or religious tradition and 28 have no religious affiliation.
- There are 12 teachers at the school, 4 of whom are baptised Catholic. Nine teachers teach Religious Education. Six teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education.
- The Headteacher, the Religious Education subject leader and the vast majority of teaching staff are new to the school since the last inspection.
- The Chair of Governors is new to his post and most of the governors are new to the school since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St. Nicholas is a good school in providing Catholic Education.

CATHOLIC LIFE

The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is good.
- Pupils appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school.
- They live their mission and understand ways they can live it out. Some of the school councillors were involved in discussing the aims and objectives emanating from it and in making suggestions for improvements.
- Pupils show a respect for themselves and others. Most pupils behave in an exemplary manner. They are kind and considerate towards each other and generally have an enthusiastic attitude towards life in school. They show an understanding of the need to forgive, be forgiven and have a good understanding of right and wrong. They are quick to congratulate others.
- Pupils accept the responsibilities of living within a Catholic school community. Regardless of their culture or belief, pupils respect the Christian ethos of the school. As a result, they are regularly involved in those activities which promote the Catholic Life and mission of the school. They are alert to the needs of others and seek justice for others within and beyond the school community.
- They are highly involved in fundraising activities and have organised collections for Mission Together, CAFOD, Save the Children etc. They are alert to the needs of others and have collected food for local foodbanks and participated in 'Superhero' days to raise funds.
- Pupils undertake roles of responsibility e.g. as prefects and councillors, proudly and enthusiastically.
- Pupils participate well in opportunities provided by the school, such as visits and retreats. Pupils in Year 6 enjoyed taking part in a retreat day which allowed them to reflect on their successes and to look forward to the next stage of their learning.
- Pupils respond well to the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development. As a result, they are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of physical, emotional and spiritual growth.
- Pupils embrace a holistic approach to education, have an understanding of what it means to have a vocation and recognise the importance of using their gifts in the service of others.
- Pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish community and the Archdiocese. As a result, they are involved with parish and Archdiocesan celebrations and activities, irrespective of their own faith commitments. Pupils of all ages enjoyed participating in the Metropolitan Cathedral's Jubilee celebrations and Year 2 pupils took part in the Cathedral's Nativity performance.
- Pupils feel able to express a pride in their own religious and cultural identity and beliefs. They embrace their diversity and are true beacons of tolerance and understanding. They are sensitive to the multicultural nature of the school and how others may have different beliefs and practices to theirs. They truly appreciate the need to respect each other's views. This has been reflected in discussions held during the school's Multicultural and Refugee Weeks.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good.
- The school Mission Statement clearly expresses the educational mission of the Church. It is displayed in the entrance hall for visitors to see and in every classroom and work base. Adults ensure children reflect on how the mission can be lived out in the day to day life of the school.
- Staff members are committed to its implementation across the curriculum and throughout the whole of school life. They participate in school activities which reflect the Catholic Life and mission of the school, such as staff prayer, Continuous Professional Development on Catholic Life etc.
- There is a clear sense of community at all levels, evident particularly in the strength of relationships and the interactions staff members have with pupils and their families.
- From entry into the school, the environment reflects its mission and identity through obvious signs of its Catholic character. Displays of photographs, devotional areas etc. around the school show how the Catholic Life is celebrated.
- Staff members promote high standards of behaviour and are good role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils.
- The curriculum reflects a commitment to care for our common home and to the dignity of every human person.
- The school provides many opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff.
- The parish clergy are very effective in supporting and promoting the Catholic Life of the school.
- Policies and structures are in place, which provide pastoral care to pupils, and there is a commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in both policy and practice. This is a real strength of the school and staff members work hard to support both children and their families, especially those in need. The Pastoral Care Team work with multiple agencies to support those in difficulties. They work closely with Family Support Services to provide funding, counselling and therapies.
- The school has a high regard for the pastoral needs of staff and members' needs are understood and catered for.
- Pastoral programmes, Personal, Social and Health Education and Relationships and Sex Education are planned well and reflect Catholic teachings and principles.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- Leaders and governors are good in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders and governors now demonstrate a public commitment to the mission of the Church. They are well-regarded as models of Catholic leadership by both staff and pupils.
- The development of the Catholic Life of the school is viewed by leaders and governors as a core leadership responsibility.
- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is given priority by leaders. This is reflected in the school's self-evaluation which involves monitoring, analysis and self-challenge and is clearly focused on the Catholic Life of the school and the Mission Statement. This leads to planned improvements to further enhance the Catholic Life of the school.
- Continuous Professional Development focusing on the Catholic Life of the school occurs and is effective. As a result, staff understanding of the school's mission is good. Staff members are involved in shaping and supporting it. As one adult in school wrote, "St. Nicholas' is a

school which embeds the values and reverence of the Catholic faith as well as respecting the cultural values of all faiths”.

- Leaders and governors are excellent role models for staff members and pupils alike.
- St Nicholas’ is a diverse and inclusive community. It is proud to be a School of Sanctuary, committed to being a safe and welcoming place for all, where everyone is treated equally and as valued members of the school community.
- The general school curriculum aims to create situations where children love learning, seek challenges, value effort and persist in the face of adversity. It is underpinned by values important to the school such as the uniqueness of the individual and respect for diverse cultures. It promotes inclusion, co-operation and understanding among all members of the community. The school treats pupils with fairness and honesty as it strives to provide equal opportunities to enable each one to become successful and fulfilled.
- The weekly celebration assembly, linked to the Mission Statement acknowledges children’s gifts and improvements.
- There are now strong home, school, parish links within this close, caring community.
- The school is sensitive to the needs of parents/carers. It has strategies for engaging with them to the benefit of pupils, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult. As a result, parents/carers have a good understanding of the school’s mission and are supportive of it.
- The school has developed an excellent relationship with the parish and the chaplain and deacon play key roles in the life of the school. They visit regularly and also plan and lead many liturgical celebrations as well as supporting the curriculum.
- Governance has recently been restructured and now ensures that these thorough home, school and parish links are maintained and strengthened.
- As leaders, the governing body is now highly ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and leads by example in the way it emphasises Catholic Life as a school improvement priority. A Religious Education Link Governor supports leaders in effectively promoting, monitoring and evaluating the Catholic Life of the school.
- Governors make a significant contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are passionate and highly supportive of the school’s mission, are involved in its evaluation and are ready to challenge as well as support where necessary.
- The school now responds well to Archdiocesan policies and initiatives and promotes the Archdiocesan vision throughout the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.
- Pupils, from their wide and varied starting points, make good progress in each key stage.
- Groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are also making progress comparable to the progress of other pupils.
- Pupils, relative to their age and capacity, are becoming religiously literate and engaged young people who use their knowledge, understanding and skills, to reflect spiritually, and to think ethically and theologically. As a consequence, pupils are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- Pupils are actively engaged in lessons and are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills, in order to further develop as competent learners.
- Pupils concentrate well, have an understanding of how well they are doing, of what they need to do to improve, and can articulate how they have made progress.

- Pupils approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm. Pupils enjoy challenging activities, and respond well to opportunities which extend their learning, often undertaking extra work and research. Behaviour in lessons is very good because pupils enjoy Religious Education and disruptions in lessons are unusual.
- On the day of inspection, pupils worked enthusiastically on their tasks. They co-operated well with their peers and remained interested and on task throughout their lessons even when without close adult direction.
- Pupils are able to talk about their learning and appreciate its relevance to their own lives. They can relate values from the Gospel to everyday life in school and beyond.
- Pupils' attainment, as indicated by teacher assessment and/ formal assessment is good. Pupils achieve at least average attainment. This is an improving trend.
- The quality of pupils' current work, both in class and in books is good. However, presentation of work varies and this should be monitored closely to ensure consistency.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education is good.
- The established cycle of lesson observations and scrutiny of planning conducted by the subject leader demonstrates that teachers plan and deliver consistently good and often outstanding Religious Education lessons. This was not always the case on the day of inspection as some teaching required improvement.
- Planning is linked to pupils' current assessment so that pupils learn well. Planning should be rationalised to focus on what the different groups of pupils are going to learn and do during their lessons.
- Most teachers are confident in their subject expertise and have a good understanding of how pupils learn. As a consequence, pupils apply themselves well and make good progress in lessons and over time.
- Teachers work hard to improve outcomes for pupils especially those with English as an additional language and transient pupils.
- They employ a range of appropriate strategies, including individual and collaborative work. They consistently recap on prior learning at the start of lessons and then swiftly move learning on. Consequently, pupils are motivated and engaged in lessons.
- High quality resources, including other adults and visitors are used effectively to optimise learning for pupils. On the day of inspection, displays in Religious Education were vibrant and most contained children's work across the process in *Come and See* and contained the key vocabulary for the topic. Working walls were used very effectively in some classes and this practice should be shared more widely.
- Teachers manage time well to secure learning in lessons and across sequences of lessons.
- Teachers use observation and questioning during lessons in order to adapt tasks and explanations, so improving learning for pupils. Most teachers make effective use of questioning to assess learning and often probe deeply to get the best from their pupils.
- Teachers communicate high expectations about Religious Education to their pupils, and most respond positively.
- Teachers ensure pupils are involved in evaluating how well they are achieving. This contributes to their good progress and increases their confidence in making further improvements.
- Good quality feedback leads to the engagement, interest, achievement and progress of pupils. Pupils are often given the opportunity to respond, which improves their understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- Achievement and effort are often affirmed and celebrated leading to good levels of motivation from pupils.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors are good in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education. The subject is a priority for the school.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the required amount of curriculum time is given to Religious Education in each key stage.
- They ensure that Religious Education is comparable to other core curriculum subjects, in terms of professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation. Leaders should, however, ensure that this core subject is taught consistently by the class teacher.
- Any additional requirements and policies of the Archdiocese regarding the Religious Education curriculum are fully implemented.
- Robust systems are now in place to monitor and evaluate the subject and outcomes are improving as a consequence.
- Children's work is assessed in line with Archdiocesan expectations, levelled and moderated each term. Tracking of pupil groups has begun and is already having an impact on standards.
- Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of Religious Education is a very good reflection of frequent assessment, tracking, monitoring, analysis and self-challenge which is informed by current best practice in Religious Education. This results in strategic action taken by the school which leads to at least good outcomes in Religious Education.
- The curriculum leader for Religious Education has a clear vision for teaching and learning and a good level of expertise in securing this vision. These are used to improve teaching and learning in Religious Education, resulting in teaching that is likely to be at least consistently good. A very good handbook supports staff in their delivery of the subject.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education is planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and to secure coherence across different key stages and phases.
- Governors frequent the school both formally and informally to keep updated of the progress made. The link governor has met regularly with the subject leader to support her development and leadership of the subject. Together, they identify and implement training requirements in order to improve attainment for pupils.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is good.
- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship. They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in prayer appropriately and with confidence.
- Pupils regularly prepare and lead parts of worship with confidence, enthusiasm and a degree of independence. They are thoughtful in their planning of liturgy and understand the liturgical structure used for worship.
- Pupils use a variety of approaches to prayer which includes scripture, religious artefacts, liturgical music and other forms of prayer both traditional and contemporary. Most pupils value and participate voluntarily in liturgy and prayer.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts and the approaches this requires in the planning of appropriate worship opportunities. They enjoy changing devotional spaces and can use liturgical colours to reflect these times.

- The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background.
- They have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths. This is reflected in the respectful manner in which many pupils engage in prayer and liturgy. Pupils are often enthusiastic in their participation regardless of their own religious faith.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good.
- Collective Worship is part of the life of the school and prayer is often included in school celebrations. Praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff. A new school prayer has been developed and is regularly used in prayer and worship.
- The weekly hymn practice session enables pupils to learn new songs to use in worship and liturgies. These sessions are popular with the children who greatly enjoy them.
- Collective Worship is given a high priority in terms of planning, evaluating and resourcing; as a result, experience of Collective Worship is engaging and members of the community speak positively about these opportunities.
- The structure of Collective Worship is clear and staff members have received recent training to further develop a more cohesive approach across the school. This has already had an impact on staff confidence. Worship is delivered in a lively and reflective manner with the opportunity given to children to think about the message from scripture and how they can live it out. Opportunities for communal prayer should also consistently become a part of the 'Respond' section.
- Collective Worship has a purpose, message and direction. The themes chosen for worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school.
- Relevant staff have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and ensure that pupils have relevant experiences of the Church's liturgical life. Celebrations are held in Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. Feast days and special times such as the feast of St. Nicholas, Harvest Festival and the Good Shepherd Day are also marked, thus reflecting the Christian nature and ethos of the school. Worship times also take into account current affairs issues that affect pupils both locally and globally.
- Staff members ensure that the spiritual and moral development of pupils is at the heart of themes for worship.
- Staff members are skilled in helping pupils to plan and deliver quality worship as appropriate. They have a good understanding of the purpose of Collective Worship and the variety of methods and styles of prayer.
- Opportunities are planned in a manner that facilitates attendance by other adults associated with the pupils and school and response to this invitation is good. Many parents and governors attend and actively participate in worship sessions delivered at the Cathedral, in whole school assemblies and within classes and phases.

How well leaders, governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Leaders and governors are good in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Collective Worship.
- Collective Worship is given priority in terms of planning and resourcing. Leaders and governors recognise the importance of providing staff members with continuing professional development relating to worship and have recently organised such a training session incorporating liturgical formation and the planning for Collective Worship.

- Leaders provide policies and guidelines to enable staff members and children to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship. Consequently, staff have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of worship and are confident in their delivery.
- Leaders have a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. They make these accessible to the pupils in a contemporary context.
- Leaders of Collective Worship within the school are appropriate models of good practice for staff and pupils. They regularly discuss and share good practice with others.
- They promote pupils' planning and leading Collective Worship.
- Leaders and governors regularly review Collective Worship as part of their self-evaluation processes. It is discussed during headteacher's reports to governors. Governors have joined Collective Worship as part of staff meetings as well as whole school and class worship.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Raise the standards of attainment in Religious Education further by:
 - continuing to address the areas identified on the Self Evaluation Document.
- Further develop the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education by:
 - ensuring teachers continue to develop the 'Driver Words' from the current *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education* into their planning, questioning and day to day repertoire to more accurately challenge and support pupils during lessons;
 - making more effective use of plenary sessions to assess learning and move it forward;
 - continuing to develop teachers' subject knowledge.
- Further develop the work being undertaken in Catholic Life by:
 - reviewing the school's Mission Statement with the whole school community to ensure it is fully accessible to all;
 - continuing to develop a curriculum map for Relationships and Sex Education and embedding *Journey In Love* and *No Outsiders* into lessons to support Relationships and Sex Education.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	2
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CATHOLIC LIFE

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	2
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school	2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	2

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	2

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is Outstanding, Grade 2 Good, Grade 3 Requires Improvement and Grade 4 Inadequate