

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

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 the school

St. Ambrose is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Speke mainly serving the parish of St. Ambrose. There are 208 children on roll of whom 190 are baptised Catholic, 18 come from other Christian denominations, and none from other faith or religious traditions. There are 15 teachers of whom 11 teach Religious Education 12 are Catholic. Nine teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Since the last inspection the senior assistant head (who was also the Religious Education subject leader) has become acting headteacher and the role of Religious Education subject leader has been temporarily taken over by another member of staff.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Inspection Judgements

Overall effectiveness:
How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main Findings:-

St. Ambrose is a good Catholic Primary School with many outstanding features. There is a clear vision for Catholic Education which is embraced by the whole school community. Since the last inspection the school has securely maintained and effectively built on previous performance. Self evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Outcomes for pupils are very good. There is no significant difference in performance between groups of pupils. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are very good. The school is successful in addressing the areas it has identified for improvement. The acting leadership team is deeply motivated and consistently communicates its high expectations to staff in order to secure improvement. Staff are affirmed and supported. Teachers are provided with in-service to support their ongoing development. Realistic and challenging plans stem from the accurate analysis obtained through monitoring and is being used effectively to improve outcomes. Any underperformance is challenged.

Overall the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Raise the standards of attainment in Religious Education further by:
 - embedding the use of the driver words when planning and differentiating for groups of children across the whole school;
 - ensuring differentiation is by both task and outcome.
- Further develop the work being done in assessment, monitoring and tracking of children's progress by:
 - using information gleaned through analysis of assessment data to set higher targets for pupils;
 - provide a range of assessment opportunities to challenge the more able pupils.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' achievement in Religious Education is good. On entry to St. Ambrose many children have a limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. Pupils' attainment in Religious Education is satisfactory. Pupils make very good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining the appropriate level for their age and stage of development in each Key stage. There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender.

Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are good. Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, skills and understanding is developing appropriate to their age or capacity. They are developing the skills that enable them to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Pupils are encouraged to work independently, in pairs and collaboratively in small groups. Pupils' enjoyment of their learning is excellent as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and exemplary behaviour. Pupils are actively involved in developing and evaluating the Catholic character of the school by completing questionnaires and reviewing the Mission Statement. Pupils' have an excellent sense of belonging to the school community and value and respect others.

Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school e.g. becoming school councillors, nominated area parliament members, buddies, monitors to name but a few, and in the wider community as ambassadors of the school e.g. carol singing in the local factories. Pupils have a keen awareness of their need for outreach and support many local, national and international charities first hand and through fundraising including CAFOD, Nugent Care and East Africa Crisis etc. Pupils benefit from participation in a variety of residential and retreat activities such as visits to the Isle of Man, Colomendy Activity Centre, Crosby Hall Education Trust etc. Year 6 pupils are also linked to St. Ambrose Catholic Primary School in Kidderminster and reciprocal visits take place. Pupils are considerate and caring of others both in school and the wider community. Pupils have an excellent sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. Education for personal relationships has fostered positive attitudes in pupils. Pupils take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions. They praise and acknowledge the contribution of others. They show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences.

Pupils are outstanding in responding to and participating in the schools Collective Worship. They are becoming increasingly more confident preparing focus areas and leading worship from their earliest years. They act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings. They sing joyfully, reverently reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence. No-one is expected to act in a manner contrary to their beliefs and all show mutual respect. Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing. They become familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
How well pupils achieve in Religious Education	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education 	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

The quality of teaching is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and make very good progress. Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning and ensure differentiated tasks when planning so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding. In the best lessons excellent use is made of time and resources e.g. learning support assistants, interactive whiteboard, audio and visual media clips, God's and Church's Story, computer suite etc. Teachers and others use a variety of strategies to sustain and motivate pupils e.g. praise and affirmation, creativity, rewards i.e. golden tickets, star of the week etc. Pupils are informed of their progress and how to improve both orally and through marking which is very reflective. They are given opportunities to discuss their work and progress.

The assessment of pupils work in Religious Education is good. Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance. St. Ambrose has very good assessment strategies which provide detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are doing and tackle underachievement however standards need to be raised further. Teacher and pupil expectations need to be raised when undertaking assessment tasks. Teachers need to provide a range of assessment opportunities that create greater depth and challenge especially for the more able pupils. To aid this process a portfolio of levelled work needs to be built up and maintained to enable quality assurance during moderation. Teachers enable pupils to evaluate their own work. Assessment information is collated by the subject leader and shared with the leadership team, governors and parents. Achievement and effort are celebrated both in class and during assemblies where certificates are awarded. Pupils are affirmed, know how well they are doing and know what they need to do to improve further.

The curriculum is very good in meeting pupils' needs. The school using the Here I Am programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements. Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. In the best lessons, imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils learning e.g. adult role play, drama, think, pair, share, outdoor activities etc. Curriculum outlines are provided for parents who are consulted on different issues depending on the topic being covered. The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate. Enrichment activities such as sports, singing, drama and music have a positive impact on the curriculum. St. Ambrose runs a breakfast club. The Religious Education curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The Collective Worship provided at St. Ambrose is outstanding in reflecting the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the Faith backgrounds among the pupils. Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the Spiritual needs of the pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community. Children are enabled to

pray formally and informally. The school provides opportunities for Staff to develop the skills in planning and leading Collective Worship. The teachers provide the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship. The school has made excellent use of space in order to create thoughtful devotional areas. The parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school and is regularly invited to attend both class and whole school Collective Worship. Opportunities are provided for parents, carers, parishioners and the local community to participate in a variety of celebrations of the 'Here I Am' programme i.e. Rejoice and seasonal Assemblies and the Church's liturgical year. The school hosts a Liturgy of the Word once a term for pupils and their families.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	2
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the schools

Leaders and managers are outstanding in promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school and show an excellent understanding of and commitment to the Mission of the Church. This is reflected in the Schools own Mission Statement '*To embrace within our lives and learning the spirit of Jesus*'. All who form part of the school community including parents, Priest, governors and children were involved in the development of the Mission Statement and its current review. Its aims and practical objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life. Excellent opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and Mission of the school. The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge. The schools analysis provides a basis to celebrate strengths and outlines areas for development. Induction and in-service training has enabled staff to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and play their unique part in it for example newly qualified teacher and subject leader training and staff undertaking the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. A range of opportunities for Spiritual and Moral developments are provided for staff and pupils' such as staff praying together, the use of 'Before You Begin', staff and pupils celebrating together at the start of each year and Parish feast days.

Leaders and managers are good in the way they use monitoring data to evaluate the schools performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements. There is evidence of monitoring which impacts on future planning. The acting Subject Leader is effective in guiding Religious Education. He shows enthusiasm and commitment to the role and regularly attends co-ordinator training, Archdiocesan in-service and Topic Days. He introduces new initiatives when appropriate. Very good documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary.

Governors are good in fulfilling their responsibilities. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school through their involvement in the development of the Mission Statement and in their total commitment to the Catholic life of the school. They have the expertise to meet the school's needs and new members have attended the 'Role of the Foundation Governor' training. Some Governors actively help and support voluntarily in the classroom which the parish priest as Chair commends as *"getting to know the school from the inside..."*

Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the religious diversity within the school. Prayers and hymns are often said and sung in Polish and Spanish to reflect its growing population and culturally diverse staff. There are positive relationships at every level within the school. Leaders and managers facilitate pupils' involvement in service to the local Faith, the immediate neighbourhood served by the school and the wider community. High school pupils are encouraged to act as peer mentors/advocates during Sacramental preparation. Dialogue and collaboration is encouraged with people who hold different beliefs and values. The use of the 'Here I am' programme promotes community cohesion. Children have explored the beliefs and values of other Faiths and religions including Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. During the topic of Islam a member of Staff held an assembly to allow pupils to gain an insight into being a Muslim. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met	2
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	2