

Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School

Boadicea St, London N1 0TB

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 30 June 2022

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils



A. Classroom religious education requires improvement

- Religious Education is not challenging enough and opportunities are missed for pupils to make sufficient progress from starting points.
- Moderation of RE is not as rigorous as it should be and this impacts on the accuracy of assessment judgements.
- Quality of teaching varies across the school and is not consistently good; this hinders pupils' achievements.
- Planning for progression in the RE curriculum is not developed systematically to ensure that pupils build on their learning.
- Expectations of pupils are not consistently high enough, especially for the most able.
- Pupils are not confident about their next steps in RE and find it difficult to articulate how well they are doing.
- Continuous provision of RE in Early Years Foundation does not provide sufficient opportunities for learning new skills and challenging pupils' thinking.
- The learning environments for RE are not always planned to encourage independence, collaboration and curiosity.

Classroom religious education has the following strengths

- The content of classroom RE is based on the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* and is covered sufficiently.
- Leaders and Governors have an understanding of the school's areas for development and the actions needed to improve standards.
- New staff are building their knowledge in religious education.
- Pupils' behaviour for learning is good and they demonstrate positive attitudes in RE lessons.

B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- The school's mission, '*With Christ's love at the centre of our living and learning, together we aim for excellence*', is clearly understood and lived by the school community.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the Church's call to action and service.
- There are a variety of opportunities for prayer and worship which is evidence of the school's aim to '*seek to live out the values of Jesus Christ*'.
- Pupils are respectful of one another and value their school as a family.
- Religious education is prioritised within the curriculum and has a budget in line with other core subjects.
- Parents are very supportive of the school.
- Governors are committed to the school and can clearly articulate the strengths and areas of development for the school.
- The RE Team have a clear action plan to improve standards in the school.

The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- Prayer and worship does not yet offer a range of engaging, innovative and creative experiences for pupils.
- Pupils are not actively engaged in supporting those in need in a creative and dynamic way.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunity to develop their gifts and talents in order to fully understand the call to serve.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school continues to look for additional ways of supporting able pupils to make outstanding progress in religious education by encouraging independent work and a deep engagement in their own learning. Evidence was seen, on occasion, of the provision for more opportunities for writing at length and in depth.

The school continues to provide opportunities for pupils at all levels to carry out research to support greater progress in Attainment Target 2 by developing the staff and pupils' skills in considering how the actions of people of faith can inspire.

The content of classroom religious education requires improvement

Although the Curriculum Directory forms the basis of the content for religious education, there is a lack of creative approaches to inspire and encourage pupils to think deeply. 'Driver' words from the RE Standards document are not being used consistently to encourage rigour and challenge. In Key Stage 1, pupils' responses are often limited by worksheets which inhibit creative ways of showing their understanding or writing at length. In Key Stage 2, planning for opportunities to make links between their understanding of beliefs and links to sources, worship and life is limited. Prayer areas and displays in the classrooms lack imagination and do not allow for any discussion or intellectual curiosity. This is especially true, but not limited to the RE learning environment in the Early Years Foundation setting, where there are very limited opportunities for children to explore, create and think about their learning. The outdoor provision in the early years needs immediate review and attention to ensure pupils can fully engage in and think about their RE learning.

Pupil achievement in religious education requires improvement

Pupil achievement in religious education requires improvement. This is because pupils do not achieve as well in RE as they do in other core areas of the curriculum across all key stages. This is evident from the school's own assessment data and from benchmark measures against the diocesan age-related standards. Activities in the classroom and in assessment tasks do not always match the standards, and in some assessment examples seen, pupil outcomes do not match the learning intention. Pupils, although they enjoy RE, are not clear about how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. Learning intentions and activities are not rigorous enough to stretch and challenge pupils consistently across the school and, as a result, progress is not as good as it should be. Pupils, in most lessons, are passive learners but nonetheless are impeccably behaved and keen to learn. They are respectful of one another and work collaboratively.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

The quality of teaching across the school varies and is not consistently good. The school has had a high turnover of staff and many staff have not had experience of teaching in a Catholic school. Leaders are aware of this and training of staff in the RE programme 'Foundation Stones' is a key priority for the school.

In lessons where pupils made the most progress, the pace of teaching ensured pupils were interested and challenged. In these lessons, pupils were offered opportunities to work independently, think reflectively and collaborate with one another. In lessons that require improvement, pace was slow, resources used did not inspire pupils to actively participate and

learning intentions were not challenging enough. There was limited use of creativity in terms of ICT, art or music although some role-play was evident in lessons and in books. Teachers demonstrate good relationships with the pupils and create safe learning environments.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education

requires improvement

There has been a change of leadership and management during the Covid pandemic, and this has resulted in a difficult period for the school, especially in terms of a falling roll. Some significant changes are now beginning to take place, such as the re-opening of the school's Nursery, which is beginning to attract greater numbers in the early years. The school's self-evaluation is reasonably accurate and the RE action plan, developed by the new RE team, shows a developing understanding of the areas for development. Leaders are honest and open about the need for increasing rigour in the RE curriculum and are very keen that this should be actioned swiftly.

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

- The RE curriculum needs further planning and structure to ensure that the content is delivered at a deeper level with more challenge, thereby enabling pupils to make sufficient progress as they move through the key stages.
- More effective monitoring will ensure teachers are confident in assessing pupils' work which will then enable pupils to articulate the progress they are making.
- The learning environment for RE in Early Years Foundation and other areas of the school needs to be carefully planned to impact on pupils' engagement, sense of awe and wonder, and curiosity.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, the school has ensured that the pupils' experience of 'retreat' has been a focus. Through the Covid pandemic, pupils were clearly not able to experience this off site and the school has developed various ways to bring a retreat experience to the pupils. This includes a Spirituality day, a daily act of meditation and pupils in Year 6 use 'Sacred Space,' a 3-minute online retreat resource for daily meditation.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is good

The school places religious education at the core of the curriculum and fulfils its requirement for 10% dedicated time in all key stages. The school's mission, *'With Christ's love at the centre of our living and learning, together we aim for excellence'*, is articulated well by the pupils and they are able to live this out in their relationships with staff and with one another. Pupils describe their school as a 'family' and, almost without exception, when asked what they thought were the best aspects of their school, they mentioned their teachers and their friends. There are numerous RE displays around the school which are evidence of the school's understanding of having religious education at the core of the curriculum. As pupils increasingly add their work to these displays they will make more of an impact on their understanding. Leaders are aware of the necessity of continuing to invest in staff professional development for RE, which is an ongoing priority.

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

is good

It is evident that prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and this is becoming increasingly creative and engaging. Staff are committed to ensuring opportunities for prayer and worship are a daily experience and pupils display a dignified reverence, particularly noticed in the daily meditation in each class. Pupils from other faith traditions join in these meditations as the experience demonstrates an understanding and respect for all religious traditions. Older pupils lead collective worship with younger ones and the school is aware that these opportunities must be prioritised. Such pupils are encouraged to ensure they lead worship that is innovative to encourage increasing response from the younger pupils. The pupil chaplains embrace the opportunities they are given in leading worship and are very proud of their role in promoting the Catholic life of the school. The school's prayer garden has been updated and pupils are now keen to make this a regular feature for prayer and worship. They spoke with passion about the May celebration and the crowning of Our Lady in the garden. The school plans celebrations in line with the liturgical year and ensures the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is at the heart of its provision. Pupils understand that the name of their school, Blessed Sacrament, is particularly poignant when they celebrate Mass together. They are engaged in the planning of worship and were keen to tell inspectors about the roles they played in the recent Mass to celebrate the feast of St Peter and St Paul. The school endeavours to include parents as much as possible in the experience of Catholic worship and, during the pandemic, the school made a concerted effort to include parents in the celebration of Mass, nativities and assemblies.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –**is good**

The school supports a variety of charities and pupils were able to articulate these to inspectors. They were particularly keen to talk about their contribution to the local food bank and, in response to local homelessness, the Year 5 Caritas Ambassadors took part in a campaign to support 'Wrap Up London.' The school also supports visits to the Muriel Street Care Home and raises funds for CAFOD and the Catholic Children's society. They have also recently become engaged with the 'Congo Tree' project which aims to support children in their plight against being used to mine cobalt and coltan in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Teachers have reinforced the pupils' understanding of the Pope's encyclical 'Laudato Si' and pupils were able to discuss the need for the care of our common home. The school's Eco-Leaders have drawn up an action plan for sustainability across the school and taken part in projects such as 'Recycling, Upcycling day,' Arsenal 'Planet Superleague,' 'One plastic bag writing' and an 'Art day.' The majority of fundraising events however, are planned by staff, and the pupils have said that they would be eager to have more input into engaging with the Common Good and to be of service to others across all projects the school supports. Pupils are acutely aware of the Church's call to serve and are eager to be given the responsibility to lead fundraising projects.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**is good**

The partnership with parents, school and parish is good and the school promotes good links to ensure a strong school community. Parent surveys received during the inspection indicate that parents are happy with the school's provision of RE, with one parent stating, 'I am extremely happy with RE at Blessed Sacrament school. This has played a big part when choosing a school for my child.'

Inspectors spoke to the parish priest and received a letter from the assistant parish priest, both indicating their support and appreciation of what the school achieves in terms of religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The assistant priest describes a 'meaningful relationship with the school,' and praises the commitment of the leadership team. The school maintains good links with the local deanery and diocese, ensuring that the school engages in the many services offered. The executive headteacher is a member of the diocesan Racial Justice, Equality and Diversity committee.

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

The leadership and RE team are committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school in their strategic vision. The RE action plan and self-evaluation form reflect an accurate reflection of what the school needs to do to develop further. They have recently revisited their mission statement and this is beginning to have an impact on the school's understanding of the need to improve standards and strive towards excellence. They acknowledge the challenges the school has faced in recent years, are proud of their school and show a clear commitment to creating a vibrant, worshipping community where all are cared for and valued. The governing body is ambitious for the school, understands its needs and provides a supportive approach to the strategic leadership of the school. They know the school well and share in all aspects of school life through regular visits. The leadership team are fully committed to sustaining ongoing professional development for all staff to ensure they are confident in their delivery of RE and able to deepen their understanding of the distinctiveness of their Catholic school.

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

- Opportunities for prayer and collective worship need to be increasingly vibrant and engaging.
- The school needs to set higher expectations for pupil voice and pupils therefore need to be more actively engaged in supporting those in need and proactive in their efforts to respond to the service of others.

Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic school in the locality of Islington.
- The school serves the parish of Blessed Sacrament, Islington
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 42%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 37% and from other faiths is 4%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 43%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3.
- There are 21% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 3 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average.
- There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 68 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (57%).

Department for Education Number	206/3643
Unique Reference Number	100451
Local Authority	Islington

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	120
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Fabiola Coelho
Headteacher	Ms Angelina John
Telephone number	0207 278 2187
Website	www.blessedsacrament-islington.co.uk
Email address	admin@blessedsacrament.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	December 2015
Grade from previous inspection	
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 6 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 1 assembly and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Monica McCarthy

Lead Inspector

Mr Nicholas Kehoe

Associate Inspector

Mr James Stacey

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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