



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 118768

**Our Lady's Catholic Primary School
King Edward Avenue
Dartford Kent
DA1 2HX**

Inspection date: 21 June 2017

Chair of Governors: Mrs M McAleese
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School is situated in the Gravesend Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is in Kent Local Authority. The principal parish it serves is St Anselm's, but pupils also come from St Vincent's and St Mary of the Cray, and a smaller number from St John Vianney and St Francis de Sales. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 84%. Overall, the weekly allocation of curriculum time to Religious Education is 10%.

The school takes pupils from ages 4 – 11. Currently, there are 219 pupils on roll.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The attainment of pupils entering the school is broadly average. 10% of pupils are on the SEND register. The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is above average. The school receives Pupil Premium funding for 5% of the pupils. The majority of pupils are of white and black British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Our Lady's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is a warm, welcoming school with an ethos deeply rooted in Gospel Values. The distinct Catholic identity is evident in the displays throughout the school and the many opportunities for prayer. Relationships between staff, governors, parents and pupils create a confident, secure and nurturing community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Catholic leadership at all levels demonstrates a commitment to developing the prayer life of the school and delivering high standards in Religious Education. Governors and the Headteacher work together to monitor outcomes and plan further progress. Expectations are very high. As a result, the school is a thriving spiritual and learning community.

Links with the parish and home are strong, giving the school, as one parent commented, "a family feel." The Parish Priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school. He leads the school in assemblies, Masses and liturgical services. The school supports the parish throughout the year by celebrating school Masses, reading at Mass on the first Sunday of every month and encouraging attendance at a Parish Mission.

Pupils' achievements, both academic and extracurricular, are regularly celebrated throughout the school year. Pupils' successes are applauded within class, at weekly achievement assemblies, during the annual prize giving event, in newsletters and on the school website.

Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the way the school looks after and educates their children. The impact of the Catholic ethos and the care teachers give is significant. One parent described the school simply as "exceptional."

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, leaders and staff should:

- Develop and refine the questioning skills of teachers through the sharing of good practice already in the school in order to enable higher ability pupils to independently investigate open-ended questions of faith and practice.
- Review monitoring systems for Religious Education and Catholic life to ensure they are more evaluative so that they have greater impact on outcomes.
- Develop the skill sets, and thus, the effectiveness of the pupil RE and Prayer Leaders across all year groups.

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

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The Mission Statement is central to the life of the community. Pupils have written their own class mission statements to show their understanding of how it can be lived by them. A distinctive Catholic ethos permeates every aspect of daily school life. Relationships are excellent. One pupil said "We do not just care about others. We pray about them to God." Children demonstrate a good understanding of the consequences of their behaviour and actions. Behaviour is exemplary and is regularly rewarded. Most pupils resolve conflicts quickly and show respect for each other. Pupils are excellent ambassadors for the school.

Prayer is an integral part of school life. There are opportunities for prayer and worship around the school, including in the outdoor prayer gazebo, the area outside the Headteacher's office as well as in classrooms during lessons.

Pupils are proud of the contribution they make to the school. They have confidence in suggesting ideas and in taking on responsibilities. For example, the Play Leaders spend time with younger pupils to help them and act as role models. The School Council is well established. Pupils make the most of the many opportunities to contribute their ideas for improving the school. For example, they created the school motto as part of the school's faith journey.

Developing pupil leadership in Religious Education has been a major focus this year. Several Year 6 pupils are the 'RE Leaders' whose purpose is to strengthen the practice of faith within the school day. Currently, they are updating and creating a focal reflection area outside the Headteacher's office. They have established the 'Faith Tree' which highlights their learning of Other Faiths. This group has introduced a school prayer book, which pupils take home on a rota basis, to share prayer with their families. Each family then contributes a new prayer to the book.

Pupils have a strong awareness of national and global inequalities. There is a comprehensive programme of fundraising activities each year, often initiated by pupils. For example, they organise raffles during Lent to raise funds for CAFOD and poppy selling for the British Legion during November. Harvest collections are taken to the local food bank. Pupils benefit from a strong home-school partnership that supports a positive attitude to learning as well as developing their faith journey.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Levels of attainment on entry are broadly average. Progress over time is good with some pupils making rapid progress. As a result, pupils leave with a sound and secure knowledge of the Catholic faith. This is realised in the way they conduct themselves and genuinely care for each other, thus creating a very strong Christian community.

Religious Education is given a high status in the school and pupils exhibit a great deal of care with their work and how they present it. Pupils show they can apply what they have learnt to their everyday life by the way they raise social issues and discuss the concerns

they have, whilst trying to help others. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons and are always engaged in learning. Their written work shows the pride they have in their achievements. Pupils clearly want to do their best.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Pupils show great enthusiasm and a high level of engagement when gathered together for a variety of acts of worship. They are respectful, reverent and show a deep awareness of the Catholic mission of the school and God's presence in their lives. Inspectors observed the weekly 'Candle Assembly'. It was a prayerful, reflective experience. Pupils participated prayerfully and responded to the invitation to offer up their own intentions, engaging without hesitation. They are willing Altar Servers, at school and parish Masses and regularly read at Sunday Masses in the parish.

All forms and content of worship are created to be age and ability appropriate for pupils. Traditional and spontaneous prayer is encouraged both collectively and privately. Pupils are often involved in the preparing of class assemblies and they are keen to contribute.

There are many opportunities for pupils to share and express their understanding of their faith through art, dance, songs or prayers. Pupils are enthusiastic about the work of the 'RE Leaders' in setting up the prayer books and having greater input into the assemblies. This is an excellent way of involving pupils in leading and participating in acts of worship. There is a strong basis on which to grow a larger and more effective group across the school.

Pupils value the regular presence of the Parish Priest who supports the work of the school in Religious Education and Spiritual development, through leading weekly Gospel based, assemblies, attending liturgies and school celebrations and presiding over school Masses.

All classes take turns to lead assemblies and parents are always invited to these celebrations.

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How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders, governors and managers are committed to the Catholic Church's mission for education. They recognise they have a vocation to promote the Catholic life of the school and to serve the community. Governors are excellent examples to the school community by their presence at school Masses and assemblies, and by ensuring the school's vision is understood and shared by all. The Parish Priest described the relationship between the Governing Body and school leaders as a "cloth without a seam." Governors recognise the progress they have made and are aware of how to develop further. They fulfil their responsibilities and are actively involved in the Catholic life of the school. They work closely with the Parish Priest to ensure that prayer and worship are central to daily life. They attend the Governor Days which focus on school improvement.

The Headteacher leads by example. Her faith and sense of mission is recognised by pupils and parents who spoke warmly of her and recognised her leadership qualities. She leads a strong team of senior leaders and Religious Education Leader. They work effectively with the governing body and are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result, priorities for improvement are built into the school development plan. The plan always includes priorities for Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school which testifies to their value and importance.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

The Governing Body has a clear understanding of its role and responsibilities. They have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and priorities for development in relation to Religious Education. They inform themselves through the Headteacher's termly report alongside the Governor Days, monitoring activities and regular visits. The Parish Priest is the named governor for Religious Education and through his weekly visits and discussions with the Headteacher, has a very clear understanding of the religious life of the school.

Leaders engage in continuing professional development, peer monitoring and the sharing of good practice to ensure the effectiveness of their leadership. The school is part of the Gravesend Catholic Deanery of schools, a partnership of eight Catholic schools. The subject leader for Religious Education attends curriculum committee meetings to discuss pupil achievement with governors.

Religious Education is a core subject which is reflected in the standards seen and also in the pupils' work. Leaders recognise the need to develop and form the whole person, using professional skills, experience and care for others to draw out the best in everyone. Monitoring of teaching and learning in Religious Education, alongside tracking pupil progress, informs planning for further improvement in standards. Inspectors advised that leaders and governors should consider adapting their monitoring processes to ensure they are more evaluative and have even greater impact.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

The quality of teaching observed was consistently good with outstanding features and in line with the school's assessment. Lessons are planned to build upon what has gone before. Within lessons, teachers use a range of strategies and resources to enable everyone to access the curriculum and make progress. Consequently, pupils are motivated to try their best and become fully engaged in their learning. Pupils confirmed that they enjoy their lessons and appreciate the opportunities to learn through art, music, drama, poetry and dance.

Pupils are continuously challenged through suitable activities and tasks. Marking and feedback is detailed and meaningful. It celebrates learning as well as deepening understanding through effective questioning and evaluative prompts. Pupils are able to discuss what they need to do next and their responses to the teachers' comments show they see these as a means to improve their learning.

Developing and refining the questioning skills of teachers is a major priority for the school. In lessons observed, there were examples of good questioning skills, which inspectors felt should be shared along with other creative strategies. For example, higher ability pupils could be given opportunities to extend and deepen their understanding by independently investigating open-ended questions.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The school follows the 'Come and See' programme which meets the Bishop's Conference requirement for content. Planning ensures that the curriculum is delivered appropriately at each Key Stage. It is enriched by the school's focus on other religions. Additional time for prayer and reflection is given to help pupils understand the link between learning about and practising the faith. All elements of the Religious Curriculum Directory are addressed. Religious Education is carefully timetabled and each class meets the requirement of 10% of teaching time.

Following a recent review of the 'Relationships & Sex Education' curriculum, the school has adopted the 'Journey in Love' programme to give pupils a better opportunity to develop their understanding of this subject area. Parents welcomed the opportunity to meet with school leaders and have a discussion about the content of the programme and the way in which it will be delivered to the pupils.

Children are able to be reflective about their own beliefs which helps them understand and show respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values. Other Faiths are taught every year. A survey of pupils revealed that they would like to study more world faiths. As a result, this year, pupils will be exploring three faiths instead of two; Judaism, Sikhism and Islam. 'Come and See' is the main teaching resource. It is complemented by days dedicated to workshops by outside providers. The children enjoy these opportunities to learn about Other Faiths.

The impact of the curriculum is evident in the ethos of the school. It is grounded in Gospel values and lived by teachers and pupils. Behaviour is excellent and relationships are very

positive. Pupils participate in fund raising activities enthusiastically in response to their awareness of the needs of others.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

High quality Collective Worship is an integral part of the daily life of the school. The frequent celebration of Mass and the assemblies throughout the week provide opportunities for pupils to pray. Collective Worship is planned carefully and is based around the liturgical year. The Parish Priest leads the school assembly each Monday. Inspectors observed the Tuesday 'Candle' assembly. It provided pupils with the opportunity to pray collectively and privately. Pupils were confident in offering their intentions.

Other opportunities for prayer take place within the classroom at the start of each day, before lunch and again at the end of each day. Every child is given the opportunity to pray by giving praise and thanks to God using traditional prayers of the Catholic Church and many other sources of prayer. Pupils have ownership of a class prayer book which contains their own prayers and intentions.

Pupils are fortunate to be able to experience the richness of the liturgical life of the church in many ways throughout the year such as Scriptural Rosary, the Stations of the Cross during Lent, and the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation three times a year, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Nativity concerts and a joyful Carol Service at Christmas.

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