



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL CATHOLIC FIRST SCHOOL REDDITCH

Inspection dates 4th-5th June 2013
Reporting Inspector Mr Paul Nutt

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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| Type of School | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4-9 years |
| Number on roll | 296 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governors | Jane Kembery |
| School address | Downsell Road Webheath Redditch Worcs B97 5RR |
| Telephone number | 01527 546398 |
| E-mail address | head@mountcarmel.worcs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | December 2008 |
| DFE School number | 885/5200 |
| Unique Reference Number | 116909 |

Headteacher Mr Anthony Tamburro

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed 6 full RE lessons, 5 with the headteacher, 1 with the deputy headteacher. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. He held meetings with the chair and vice-chair of governors, staff, and school chaplain. He observed a whole-school Mass and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, and pupils' behaviour. He looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and internal records. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about meditation and prayer, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

Our Lady of Mount Carmel is a 2-form entry Catholic First School with a wide catchment area that covers most of the town of Redditch. It has a balanced intake, with 28% of pupils from the more socially deprived areas, a similar percentage from the more affluent. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 91%. There is a large minority of pupils from ethnic minority groups. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as are the numbers with special needs and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average overall.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation Our Lady of Mount Carmel judges itself to be a good school, with some aspects of its work that are outstanding. The evidence gathered during the inspection supports this evaluation; indeed, there are strong indications that there is both progression and capacity towards an overall judgement of outstanding. The school has consolidated and developed further the strengths identified in its last section 48 inspection in 2008, and, as recommended in that report, there is now a rigorous monitoring system in place that ensures consistency in delivery. The inspection confirmed the internal evaluations of strong teaching. Religious education is well led by the deputy headteacher, and the school's evaluation is securely founded on a wealth of supporting evidence.

The Catholic life of the school is widely evident, inclusive and rightly evaluated as outstanding. The role of the school chaplain is pivotal to much of what is good. Here, as elsewhere in the school, there is a collaborative approach that affords continuing development and improvement. Leadership is very positive, giving clear strategic guidance and accurate evaluation. The school is well supported in this by its governors, who have a very clear understanding of priorities and high expectations.

School self evaluation

The school's evaluation of its Catholic life and religious education is broadly accurate. It is a good school, with many strengths, and outstanding features in all areas. A significant amount of the school self-evaluation document is descriptive rather than evaluative and analytical, with some overlap between the two broad areas of Catholic life and religious education and there is a need for more specific exemplification and measurable evidence where appropriate. However, the inspection visit confirmed the school's internal judgements, and suggested that elements adjudged good are towards the top end of that

grading. There are systematic processes in place for monitoring and evaluating religious education and Catholic life, and the school has acted upon the recommendations of the previous inspection.

The school assesses attainment in RE to be good. There is much valuable evidence to confirm this judgement. Baseline records indicate that many pupils enter the school with weak knowledge and understanding of religion, but that accelerated progress has been achieved by the end of their first year in the school. Attainment data indicates that outcomes in RE are broadly comparable with literacy; at AT1 this is generally above average, at AT2 there is still work to do, as the school is aware. The quality of learning and progress in RE are good, as indicated in the range of evidence available, and in discussions with children, who speak positively of their lessons and teachers. This judgement was shown to apply to all groups within the school.

Pupils' contributions to the Catholic life of the school are very significant, as are the benefits they gain. This is indeed a real area of strength in the school, difficult to monitor and evaluate in a formal way, but very evident throughout the inspection visit. The school motto is at the centre of so much of its daily life and the high quality of behaviour and interpersonal relationships at all levels. These in turn contribute to all forms of collective worship and prayer life, where the school's judgement of "good and often outstanding" can be validated. There is strong evidence of pupils' involvement in support and work for charities and good causes, the liturgical life of the school and beyond, and engagement with extra-curricular opportunities. The guidance and engagement of the school chaplain plays a major part in the faith life of the school. The introduction and continuing development of Christian meditation gives an evident depth to the prayer life of the school and the pupils' spiritual development.

The school identifies leadership and management as an outstanding strength, a judgement which the inspection was able to confirm. The headteacher and his deputy, who leads on religious education, have a clear vision of the nature of Catholic education, the importance of raising standards and the promotion of individual faith development. Strong and committed leadership is evident at all levels within the school. There are effective procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating both Catholic life and religious education, leading to focused planning for school improvement. The governing body plays a significant role in challenging and supporting across the work of the school. The close links of individual governors, and the effective processes and procedures they have in place, ensure monitoring and evaluation that maintain a clear vision for continuing improvement.

Teaching is secure and well planned. The lessons seen revealed broad agreement with internal evaluations and records of internal observations. There were some examples of outstanding teaching. Assessments in RE are well structured, and effective use is made of this information for planning: a response to advice during the last inspection. Books are marked regularly, but formative feedback and exemplification is an area for development. There is good practice, but there is too little and its use is inconsistent, so that not all pupils understand their next steps. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, and use a wide range of strategies, including IT, music, prayer and scripture, to secure engagement and good progress. All children benefit significantly from the breadth and appropriateness of the school's curriculum, as well as the many opportunities to develop a maturing understanding of their faith and vocation. This judgement was borne out repeatedly during the inspection, notably in conversations with children, parents and governors.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes and provision for all pupils are good. Baseline evidence indicates that many pupils enter the school with weak knowledge and understanding, but that accelerated progress has been achieved by the end of their first year in the school. Standards in RE are broadly comparable to those in literacy, and the pupils' learning experiences are equally sound. Learning and progress are good. Lessons are well planned and incorporate a range of resources that interest and engage the pupils. These include music, drama and IT, which could perhaps be used more as a learning as well as teaching tool. All classrooms are well resourced and have excellent displays, which are relevant and colourful, with celebrations of pupils' work and prayer corners. The close work and support given by the school chaplain plays a significant part here, as well as in the areas of Catholic life, collective worship and wider pastoral involvement. The subject leader's involvement in Worcestershire RE co-ordinators' meetings ensures access to good practice and additional strategies and resources.

Teaching is secure and well planned. There were some examples of outstanding teaching. Assessments in RE are well structured, and effective use is made of this information for planning. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, and there were many examples of the effective use of review and questioning to reinforce and develop learning. Teaching assistants were generally well deployed. Relationships in all lessons observed, as around the school more generally, are positive, empathetic and consistently appropriate. The use of prayer and meditation contributes significantly to this. Pupils speak confidently about the positive impact upon them: their enjoyment and feeling safe and valued.

The Catholic life of the school is very strong, with a clear ethos and commitment evident on entry. The community mural on the front wall gives a context for this. There are many explicit links throughout the school to its motto, the Year of Faith, Pope Francis, and the wide range of charitable works in which the school is involved. Family prayer bags and home-school link books support links with families. The contribution of the school chaplain is of huge significance to the life of the school. He celebrates whole school Masses, which are always well attended by parents and governors, but in addition makes regular visits to classrooms to support teaching, learning and prayer. There is considerable pupil involvement in the faith life and collective worship of the school, notably in preparing for and leading Masses. However, the school acknowledges that developing additional opportunities for involvement in liturgical life would enhance Catholic life and pupils' living contact with their faith and vocation. As the school intake is changing, it is important to develop strategies for sustaining and developing the multi-faith and multi-ethnic dimension to the wider curriculum

Leadership and management are a strength of the school. There is a clear sense of purpose, vision and direction which is shared at all levels, including the school chaplain and governors. There is close collaboration between the different levels, but the strategic lead given by the governing body, and the operational effectiveness of senior leaders, combine to drive the school forward. The school chaplain and governors are regular visitors, and this regular contact helps to inform understanding and the monitoring and evaluation cycle. Communication is also good and includes families and the wider community through meetings, letters, newsletters, questionnaires, and a very informative and well-maintained website. There is a willingness to consider suggestions and new initiatives with the continual aim of improving in-school provision and outcomes.

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

Recommendations

The school is already aware of key areas for development and how to continue its strong progress. However, the following will be especially significant in accelerating that progress:

- Improve the quality and consistency of formative assessment so as to target future learning
- Ensure that pupils learn from religion as well as about religion (Attainment Target 2)
- Extend opportunities for children's involvement in the liturgical life of the school
- Develop strategies for sustaining and developing a multi-faith/multi-ethnic dimension to the wider curriculum



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June 2013

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic First School,
4th-5th June 2013**

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school has consolidated and developed further the strengths identified in its last section 48 inspection in 2008 and is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The leadership of the headteacher and his team is very positive, giving clear guidance to all the staff. The headteacher knows the school very well and is able to use that knowledge to plan for the best outcomes for your children from the Catholic life of the school and religious education.

The school is well supported by its governors, who have a very clear understanding of priorities and high expectations, and by its chaplain, Father Craig. The pupils speak with enthusiasm about the school and its Catholic life, enjoy their learning and feel safe and happy. When they first arrive at the school many children have limited religious knowledge but they make good progress and, by the time they leave, they have achieved good standards in RE. They are developing a good knowledge of Christ's teaching and understand the basic tenets of our Catholic faith at an appropriate level. They know and can talk about a number of Bible stories, and are learning the importance of personal and traditional prayers.

I have recommended that, in order to continue to make good progress, the school should ensure greater consistency in its feedback to pupils in order to help them understand how to develop their work. I have also recommended that the school should extend opportunities for pupils to be involved in the liturgical life of the school.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to spend time in your school and see how well your children are doing. I was made really welcome by everyone, and was very impressed by the collaboration and mutual support between the school and the wider community to ensure that all the children live happy and enjoyable lives.

Yours sincerely

Paul Nutt
Diocesan Inspector



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