

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

THE GOOD SHEPHERD CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Kingsland Gardens, Northampton ,NN2 7BH

DfES School No: 928 3355

URN: 122039

Headteacher: Mrs Anne Walker
Chair of Governors: Dr Phillip Reynolds

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Marion Betts
Associate Inspector: Mr Barry O'Byrne

Date of Inspection: 23rd January 2008

Date of previous Inspection: June 2003

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Northamptonshire Local Authority

Description of the School

The Good Shepherd is a large two form entry primary school with nursery provision for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils is 369, 83% of whom are baptised Catholic. The school serves families of the parishes of St.Aidan and the Cathedral of Our Lady and St.Thomas. It draws pupils from a wide area including from parts that experience significant social and economic disadvantage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds including those at early stages of learning English is above that expected nationally. Attainment on entry to the school is average when compared nationally. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Since the last inspection considerable building work has taken place to accommodate two additional year groups and a nursery.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school.

The Good Shepherd Primary School is a good school with a strong Catholic identity. Dedicated leadership from the headteacher, deputy and Religious Education co-ordinator effectively maintains and develops this. Prayer has a strong central role in the school's life. Staff provide a high quality of care within a secure environment and pupils achieve well. Relationships within the school are good and based on Christian care and concern for others. Pupils feel valued, respected and listened to. One pupil remarked "we are like one big family here". The pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good and this is reflected in their behaviour and attitudes. The Religious Education curriculum provides stimulating and interesting activities. Pupils make good progress throughout their school life in knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The last inspection report described the school as "a very good Catholic school". The areas for improvement related to developing assessment of Religious Education; monitoring marking to ensure individual pupils' progress; and ensuring challenge within written Religious Education work. The school has made satisfactory progress in these areas. Assessments of Religious Education knowledge and understanding are now regularly made and compared to national expectations. The standard of marking is inconsistent throughout the school but some examples of marking that led pupils to know how they could improve, was evidenced. Challenging activities for the more able pupils are now part of the lesson planning.

Grade 3

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The Catholic self-evaluation document is detailed. It was devised with input from the staff and approved by governors. The headteacher has an overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. The school improvement plan contains religious education targets but these do not result from the monitoring of teaching, learning and standards.

Grade 3

What the school should do to improve further.

- Develop assessment to link pupils' achievement to the new levels of attainment and use the results to set individual pupil targets and ensure pupil progress.
- Develop Religious Education marking procedures to inform pupils as to how they could improve and give them opportunities to make these improvements.

- To ensure chaplaincy provision is enhanced and understood by all.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The headteacher sets clear direction for promoting and improving the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement is known and understood by pupils, staff and governors and displayed in classrooms, on policy documents and on newsletters to parents. It is reflected in the daily activities of the school. The governors are supportive and well informed about the school's religious life. The school is effectively managed in a way that ensures regular monitoring and evaluating of its work. Many high quality displays emphasise the Catholic ethos and remind the community of God's love. Leadership promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development very well. The pupils display respect towards each other and adults. They value the friendly, caring attitude of the staff who listen to them and encourage their learning. Pupils' achievements are recognised and valued. Good links exist with parents although in the questionnaires a small minority felt that their views were not listened to. Parents are given regular information which includes how they could help with the Religious Education learning at home. There are links with the parish church and a strong partnership has been built with the cathedral. A canon from the cathedral, who is also a governor, visits regularly and is well known by the school community.

Grade 2

The prayer life of the School.

Prayer is an integral part of each school day. Pupils compose their own prayers as part of their Religious Education learning. Worship contributes very effectively to pupils' spiritual and moral development. During worship pupils are given opportunities to reflect on the theme and how they could apply this to their own lives. Pupils are sometimes encouraged to pray their own intentions. There are attractive prayer tables in each classroom. Worship is effectively delivered using visual presentation and artefacts to illustrate the theme. During the worship observed, singing and music played by pupils were not used to enhance pupil participation. Music and singing are used in class assemblies. Pupils were attentive and behaved well. They enjoy assemblies and particularly the worship led by two visitors from Northampton Bible School. Pupils lead a class or year group assembly twice a year and all are involved in presenting the religious theme creatively. Whole school Mass and special services take place throughout the liturgical year. Pupils are involved in the delivery. The canon from the cathedral makes a very good contribution to the school's sacramental life. The aesthetically attractive chapel and interesting woodland garden provide quiet places for reflection and prayer.

Grade 2

Chaplaincy

The school provides satisfactory Chaplaincy provision at present and is committed to developing this. The school is fortunate that one of the governors, who is also the diocesan Rainbow co-ordinator, visits regularly and offers pastoral support to staff. Pupils benefit well from the Rainbow programme which is offered to those who need this support. This programme is evaluated thoroughly and this used to impact future delivery. The headteacher and staff are available to listen to any child with a problem. One pupil said "they help us in a very kind way". The school staff liaise effectively with the priest for organisation of Mass. The canon is regularly involved in ensuring the children understand the liturgy and helping them to take an active part in the service. He was observed teaching some pupils to sign part of the Mass service.

Grade 3

Community Cohesion

Leaders celebrate and value diversity well, one example being the display of work relating to Poland from where some pupils originate. Pupils are given opportunities to work alongside others from different backgrounds by participating in curriculum and sports activities at other schools.

They raise money or donate gifts regularly for both local and national charities and welcome visitors linked to these. The school has good links with Northampton University and also with other Catholic schools. Staff share their expertise and students are invited for work experience. Good links also exist with parents and visitors from the local community who are invited in to share their skills such as with sewing or practical activities. A visitor came to talk with pupils about her faith. Worship provides good reflection opportunities for all to link the theme with their own experiences. Parents are invited to all special assemblies and Masses. Religion Education includes studies of other world religions. One was particularly chosen because of its prominence within the local community. Parents are kept well informed about what is happening in school.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievements and Standards in Religious Education.

Pupils make good progress in gaining religious literacy. They are able to apply this learning to their own lives and experience. They achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and some achieve a higher standard. Written work is well presented. It evidences a variety of activities. Most pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons especially when illustrating work and doing practical activities. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The children are attentive, behave well and readily offer contributions and thoughts. Pupils are able access Bible references competently. They work well in groups to extend their own ideas and develop their learning. Pupils' views are taken into consideration through a school council. They devised the playground rules. Pupils enjoy undertaking responsibilities such as supporting younger pupils' learning.

Grade 2

Quality of Teaching and Learning in Religious Education

The quality of Religious Education lessons varies from satisfactory to good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well with clear learning intentions. The teaching styles were appropriate for the age of the pupils. When teaching was good, teachers made use of creative stimuli to motivate pupils with their learning. They had planned interesting activities to consolidate and develop the pupils' thinking. All pupils were able to access the tasks. In some lessons the teaching style consisted of only a question and answer session and in these the pace was too slow to maintain pupils' interest. Work is marked giving suitable praise and occasionally shows the pupils how they could improve. Assessments are completed regularly and moderated across the school. These are not yet used to track pupil achievement or inform future planning to enhance individual progress.

Grade 3

Quality of the Religious Education curriculum.

The quality of the curriculum is good, and suitable for the age of the learners. It fulfils the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. 10% of curriculum time is used for Religious Education following the "Here I Am" programme with additional work linked to the liturgical year. Pupils are encouraged to question, discuss, and reflect so becoming aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Religious Education is linked with other areas of the curriculum particularly with Drama, Art and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The curriculum makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Pupils are taught to respect other faiths. The canon is used as an extra resource for learning. Attractive Religious Education displays and RE certificates awarded at the end of each topic, give added value to this core subject.

Grade 2

Leadership and Management in Religious Education

The headteacher ensures the subject is effectively managed. The Religious Education co-ordinator provides support and guidance to teachers when needed and ensures that new teachers fully understand the Religious Education programme. Senior staff demonstrate lessons for less experienced teachers. The Religious Education co-ordinator leads staff reflection on the topic. The governors responsible for Religious Education discuss the subject with the co-ordinator. The budget given is in line with that allocated to other core subjects. Teaching and learning have been rigorously monitored and feedback given to teachers. Teachers are committed to develop their skills and understanding. 37% of the teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies or equivalent qualification. Learning resources are sufficient for the delivery of the curriculum.

Grade 2