



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Part of the Holy Family Multi Academy Company
St Faith's Road, Alcester, B49 6AG

Inspection dates:
Lead Inspector:

10th-11th December 2018
Maureen O'Leary

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: **Good**

Catholic Life: Good

Religious Education: Good

Collective Worship: Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:

Requires improvement

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- The head of school and the Religious Education subject leader have fervently promoted and improved the provision of Catholic Life for the whole school community.
- Great care has been taken by senior leaders to ensure that prayer and worship are now firmly at the heart of school life. Pupils participate in whole school Collective Worship with reverence and engagement. As a result of effective staff training, meaningful pupil led Collective Worship is a growing strength of the school.
- Senior leaders have a very precise and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development in regard to Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship. This has enabled them to target areas for improvement and ensure rapid improvement in all three areas. Governors have a growing understanding of the quality of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship in the school.
- Religious Education is seen as a core subject by leaders, governors and staff. It is increasingly valued by pupils who are generally making good progress in their learning.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- The teaching of Religious Education is not consistently delivered across the school. As a result, not enough pupils are able to achieve at the highest levels.
- Pupils' awareness of other faiths needs to be improved.

- Younger pupils have very little knowledge about vocation.
- Not enough parents/carers take part in the prayer life of the school.
- Governors need to develop their critical awareness of the school's areas for improvement in relation to Catholic Life and Religious Education.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve some teachers' subject knowledge in Religious Education, so that they are able to teach with greater accuracy and confidence.
- Ensure that tasks and questioning in lessons are closely matched to pupils' abilities. This will enable less able pupils to be better supported and more able pupils to be increasingly challenged.
- Review teaching about other faiths, so that pupils have a more developed awareness. This awareness should be helped by visits to places of worship.
- Improve teachers' understanding of vocation and how this can be taught to pupils of all ages.
- Increase the opportunities for parents and carers to share in the prayer life of the school community.
- Ensure that the newly formed Ethos Committee has a precise understanding of the quality of the Catholic Life and Religious Education in the school.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.	Good

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

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

- Our Lady's Catholic School nurtures each individual pupil as a child of God. Pupils and staff know and understand how to follow the school mission, 'United together as one family in Christ'. One pupil explained to the inspector, "We are not all related, but we are one whole family. God is our Father because he created us."
- The pupils have a growing devotion to their school patron, Our Lady, and see her as a role model. They feel that her, "Yes" to God teaches them about God's plan for them, "No matter what age you are."
- The pupils' involvement in the Catholic Life of the school has increased significantly over the last year. The use of the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile (CSPP) has given pupils a shared language to talk about how they can live out their faith. They recognise how the virtues, taught through the CSPP, help them to treat each other with respect. They especially value that the CSPP teaches them to be faith-filled and hopeful, so they can confidently say, "We can trust in God to guide us through the dark times."

- Great attention has been given to improving the whole school environment, so that it promotes and celebrates the Catholic Life of the school. Many displays, in communal areas and in classrooms, teach pupils about the school motto and patron saint, the CSPP, faith in action, house saints and events in the Catholic Life of the school. A prayer garden, a memorial garden and an interactive prayer space in the hub are very well respected by pupils. They appreciate going to these places for quiet moments of prayer and reflection.
- The newly formed Faith in Action group has been a powerful force in leading the school to help those in need. The pupils have considered carefully the charities the school has supported this year. As part of their role, the Faith in Action leaders presented a thought-provoking assembly to the whole school to appeal for the local foodbank. Following their appeal, a large amount of food was donated by the school family. A further appeal for toys to donate to the Birmingham Children's hospital was also very well supported. This charity is very close to the community, as the hospital cared for a pupil, who sadly died last summer. The pupils also chose Cafod as their global charity. The enthusiasm and sincerity of the pupils was clearly expressed by one of the leaders, "We are so proud to have been chosen to do this work and with God's help we will help many others."
- Year 3 and Year 4 are presently taking part in a reverse advent calendar. This popular activity was suggested by the class teacher and welcomed by the pupils. It has helped the pupils to consider what they can give at Christmas, rather than what they will take.
- The school choir regularly visits a local residential home for elderly people. The pupils love to sing for the residents and recognise that when they do, they are living out their faith by being compassionate and loving.
- Members of the school council see it as their responsibility to improve the school for everyone. In the past they have worked to improve the amount of "fun" children can have at playtimes. They were especially concerned about younger pupils and helped them to build fairy houses. They are currently thinking about how to improve their school uniform and are considering including a miraculous medal symbol on their school tie.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of the lives of their house patron saints. They recognise that the lives of St Francis, St Anthony and St Joseph teach us that God calls all people to serve him, regardless of whether they are rich or poor.
- Through the support of the MAC lay chaplain, Years 3 and 6 have had the opportunity to take part in a retreat. The chaplain has also supported the transition of Year 6 pupils to the local Catholic secondary school, where the vast majority of pupils move onto. This collaboration was especially dear when the schools held a joint memorial service for a deceased pupil.
- All of the parents and carers, spoken to informally by the inspector at the beginning of the day, were very positive about the changes in the school over the last year. They especially appreciated the improved communication between the school and home, the staggered start to the school day, the joint school and parish sacramental preparation of the pupils and the sending home of class prayer bags.
- The school has reviewed the provision for relationship and sex education (RSE) and has mapped this provision against the pupils' learning in Religious Education, the CSPP and an RSE audit from the diocese.
- Older pupils have some understanding of vocation but this understanding is very limited for younger pupils.
- Pupils have a general awareness of other faiths and religions. This awareness has been supported by the school's celebration of a themed week and the use of newly purchased artefacts and resources. School leaders have accurately identified that this area of the school curriculum still requires further improvement.

- The school and parish priest have worked well together to improve the Catholic Life of the school and the links it has with the parish. A review of the sacramental programme, which was previously conducted solely in the parish, has led to the school and parish catechists working together. This joint programme was very successful for both the school and the parish.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.

- The head of school and the Religious Education subject leader are deeply committed to the Catholic Life of the school. Pupils, staff, parents and governors recognise the rapid improvements their leadership has brought to the Catholic Life of the whole community. The parish priest expressed the views of many, "Their hearts and minds are in the right place and they have worked extremely hard."
- The head of school has ensured that there is a formal audit of Catholic Life each term. Over the last year, the findings from this audit have been shared with governors and staff. Although these audits only record what is provided for Catholic Life, leaders have used them to decide on actions to improve provision. As a result, the school environment has been significantly improved to celebrate its Catholic mission in education. These audits should now record the evaluations that currently take place.
- With the support of the diocese, school leaders have provided very effective training for staff to improve their knowledge of Catholic Life. Subsequently, staff have contributed well to the Catholic Life of the school by improving the school environment, attending Sunday parish Masses and initiating charitable outreach in their own classes.
- School leaders have listened to the views of parents/carers and improved the way they communicate with them about key school events.
- The recent establishment of an Ethos Committee has helped governors to understand the quality of the Catholic Life of the school. However, this committee has not been in place long enough to judge the extent of its impact on improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education.	Good
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	Good
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	Requires Improvement
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	Good

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

- Most pupils enter the school with little or no knowledge of Religious Education. The majority of pupils make good progress and achieve the expected standards by the time they leave key stage 2.
- The teaching of Religious Education throughout the school is not consistent. In some classes, the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and planning of lessons

means that pupils are engaged and enjoy their learning. However, some inexperienced teachers currently lack all the skills and knowledge to consistently teach Religious Education in an effective way.

- All staff have welcomed bespoke support to improve the effectiveness of their teaching and are constantly improving the delivery of lessons. This support has targeted individual areas for improvement and has had a positive impact on teaching.
- Teachers use an agreed planning format to prepare lessons. This has helped them to consistently include key religious vocabulary and a variety of tasks. As a result, pupils undertake a range of activities. Drama, which is well liked by pupils as a way to learn, is a regular feature in most classes. During the inspection, pupils in Reception class acted out the visit of Mary to Elizabeth, which helped them understand how kind she was to her cousin. The teacher's excellent modelling of hot seating, in Years 1 & 2, enabled them to ask and answer searching questions to Zechariah about his visitation by the angel.
- Although teachers plan tasks for pupils to complete according to their ability, the choice of these tasks need to be improved further. This will give greater support to less able pupils and greater challenge to the more able pupils.
- The vast majority of pupils see Religious Education as a very important subject. They feel that it helps them to think about God, Jesus and Mary. Many of them appreciate that during their lessons they are able to ask questions about God and some of these questions are placed on the class Wonder wall.
- However, in some lessons, usually where the discussion or activities are not accurately matched to pupils' abilities, pupils can become distracted and low-level disruption can occur.
- Additional adults are generally used well to support and challenge pupils' learning during Religious Education lessons. During the inspection, the interaction of a teaching assistant with the class teacher, as part of a hot seating activity, helped pupils to ask searching questions.
- There is a good standard of work in pupils' books and teachers have clear expectations about how pupils present their work. As a result, most pupils' work is neat and compares well to their work in other core subjects.
- Pupils appreciate the use of feedback stickers. Teachers use these to question pupils further about their learning. Where these stickers are used well, they pose thought provoking questions to pupils about how they can apply their learning in Religious Education to their own lives. The Year 3 & 4 teacher, in particular, has made good use of these stickers to deepen pupils' thinking.
- Use has been made of the diocesan unit markers to enable pupils to evaluate their own learning.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

- The head of school and the Religious Education subject leader monitor and evaluate Religious Education very effectively. They have an accurate understanding of the areas that need to be improved. They have used this knowledge to provide support and guidance for staff to improve teaching with a focus on planning, subject knowledge and learning from Religion.
- Whole school expectations of teaching in Religious Education have been shared with staff and these are confidently used by some teachers and are becoming embedded by less experienced teachers.
- The present school leaders have worked quickly to make sure that assessments in Religious Education are accurate. After moderating previous assessments, they

identified that these were not accurate. Staff training and individual support of class teachers has ensured that these judgements are now reliable. Moving forward, leaders feel that moderation across the MAC would also support the accuracy of these judgements.

- Continuous support has been given to those staff who are new to teaching in a Catholic school. This has included attendance at diocesan training and support from senior leaders. This support has been tailored to each teacher and its impact has been monitored carefully by leaders. As a result, teaching and learning is improving. This support, including support from the diocese, should continue until teaching is securely good.
- Regular book scrutinies and individual feedback to teachers, by the head of school and the Religious Education subject leader, have ensured that any areas for improvement are quickly identified. For example, a focus on literacy rather than Religious Education marking was highlighted by leaders. Subsequently, staff adapted their marking to focus on Religious Education.
- The teaching of Religious Education meets all the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Governors have been clearly informed of all the current monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education. The link governor's termly visits with the Religious Education subject leader are helping governors to hold the school to account for standards. This role now needs to develop so that it can be more rigorous and robust.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of Collective Worship.	Good
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	Good
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	Outstanding

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- Prayer is an important part of each school day for pupils and staff. Pupils explained to the inspector why prayer is important, "It brings your relationship to God closer."
- Pupils participate in times of prayer with reverence and engagement. Their positive attitudes to prayer were seen by the inspector at a whole school assembly and three examples of class Collective Worship.
- During a whole school assembly, older pupils' spiritual singing created a sacred atmosphere as younger pupils entered the school hall and joined in. This atmosphere was continued by the head of school as she allowed the school community a time of meaningful silent reflection about how each member could prepare their hearts for the coming of Jesus.
- Pupils value the messages of whole school worship, especially those led by the head of school that focus on the virtues promoted by the CSPP.
- Planned and led Collective Worship by pupils is a regular feature of school life. Pupils have used diocesan resources with growing skill and, as a result, they are able to lead Collective Worship in their own classes with confidence. Some pupils, such as the Faith in Action group, have also led inspiring whole school assemblies.

- Most pupils, from the very youngest, value the sacred scripture of the Bible, which they treat with great reverence during times of prayer.
- Class teachers now have the opportunity to lead whole school Collective Worship, which they do with increasing skill and confidence. In particular, a Remembrance Day assembly, led by a teacher new to teaching in a Catholic school, was both moving and prayerful.
- Staff and pupils are using an increasing variety of thoughtful approaches to prayer. This has helped the school community to praise through song, to reflect in silence, to use the traditional prayers of the Church and to focus on beautiful religious imagery and artefacts.
- Staff have a growing understanding of the Church's liturgical year, which is represented clearly on displays around the school and in class prayer spaces. As a result, pupils are increasingly able to talk about these different times. For example, pupils had a very clear understanding that during Advent we are preparing for the coming of Jesus into our hearts again this Christmas.
- Mass is celebrated in school by the priests from the two local parishes and occasionally the whole school attends Mass at Our Lady and St Joseph's parish, Alcester. The priests who serve the school and the school leaders are exploring ways to increase the frequency of these Masses. Both priests have been impressed with the improved preparation of pupils to fully participate in Mass as readers, offertory bearers and altar servers.
- Parents and carers are invited to school assemblies and Masses. Communication with parents/carers about these events has improved through the introduction of the noticeboard in the school playground. Leaders want to involve other adults associated with the school even more. This could possibly be achieved by inviting them to pupil led class Collective Worship.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

- The head of school and the Religious Education subject leader are relentless in their desire to place prayer at the heart of the school. In a short time, they have ensured that the whole school community has the daily opportunity to take part in meaningful prayer.
- Leaders act as excellent role models for staff, in how to plan and deliver Collective Worship that is engaging and meaningful. Reflection on their own personal encounter with Jesus in prayer, supports and encourages others on their faith journey.
- Staff have used training provided by school leaders (with support from the diocese), about helping pupils to plan and lead Collective Worship, to very good effect. They have taken great care to put this training into practice and to constantly review and improve these times of prayer.
- Leaders and governors have regularly and thoroughly reviewed Collective Worship and this has led to targeted support for individual staff and whole staff training. As a result, the quality of Collective Worship has improved rapidly and this has been appreciated by the whole school community, including parents, governors and the local parish priests.
- Governors often monitor Collective Worship and frequently attend school assemblies and Masses. This has meant that they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- With the welcomed support of the parish priest, school leaders carefully plan the themes of Collective Worship so that they reflect the Church's liturgical year,

seasons and feasts. Consequently, the school community has celebrated such themes as Our Lady's Day, Adoremus and St Lucy.

SCHOOL DETAILS.

Unique reference number	143632
Local authority	Warwickshire
<i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i>	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	100
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair of local academy committee	Angela Forde
Headteacher	Margaret Gourlay
Telephone number	01789 762555
Website address	www.ourladystmarysfederation.co.uk
Email address	Head3500@welearn365.com
Date of previous inspection	23 rd September 2015

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- Our Lady's is a smaller than average primary school. It is situated in the town of Alcester and pupils come from the town and the surrounding villages. It serves the parishes of Our Lady and St Joseph, Alcester and St Joseph the Worker, Bidford-on-Avon.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 45%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is significantly below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is broadly significantly below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is broadly in line with age related expectations.
- Since the last inspection, a new head of school and two new class teachers have been appointed.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspector observed teaching across four Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with the head of school.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship. The inspector met with the school council and faith in action leaders and had lunch with two school ambassadors.
- Meetings were held with two governors, one of whom was the Catholic Life link governor (who is also the parish priest at St Joseph the Worker), a director of the MAC, the head of school and the Religious Education subject leader. A telephone conversation was conducted with the parish priest of Our Lady and St Joseph, Alcester. Informal discussions took place with parents/carers before school on the playground.
- The inspector attended a whole school assembly and class Collective Worship in three classes, undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Catholic Life action plan and teachers' planning.