

DIOCESE OF LEEDS DBI



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Rothwell St Mary's Primary School
Royds Lane, Rothwell, Leeds LS26 0BJ

School URN

383/3364

Chair of Governors

Mrs. Clare Skinner

Headteacher

Mr. Stephen Nicholson

RE Subject Leader

Miss. Siobhan Leonard

Dates of Inspection

12 & 13 July 2010

Section 48 Inspector

Mrs. Marie McClelland

INTRODUCTION

The Inspection of Rothwell St Mary's Primary School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Leeds Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Bishop of Leeds.

The inspector accompanied one class to Mass in church, attended a whole-school and a Foundation Stage Collective Worship (CW), observed Religious Education (RE) lessons and Circle Time (CT) sessions throughout the school, one Key Stage 2 music concert practice and one Sex & Relationship Education (SRE) lesson. Discussions with staff, parents, pupils, parish priest and three governors were held over two days. A range of evidence was seen including the RE and other related aspect policies, the School Improvement Plan (SIP), several folders of photographic and other evidence of pupils' response and involvement in RE and CW over time, current records of pupil progress and attainment, a representative sample of written work in RE since the beginning of the current academic year and other examples of pupil work on display throughout the school.

Description of the school

Rothwell St. Mary's is a Voluntary Aided Primary School in the Diocese of Leeds catering for 204 children with an admissions number of 30. It serves the local Rothwell and surrounding area. Currently, 94% of the children are Catholics with 100% Catholic intake in 2009. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds with a majority from professional backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible to take free school meals is below the national average. One in five pupils is from a minority ethnic background. All pupils speak English as their first language and there are no significant minority groups at present in the school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement for special educational needs, is below average. All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

The overall effectiveness of the provision for the Catholic life of the school and RE, and the school's main strengths and areas for development.

The overall effectiveness of the provision for Catholic life and RE is outstanding. The school's Mission Statement that it is '*a welcoming community which prays, lives and learns together*' is evident in the strong family ethos of the school and especially in the confident *sense of belonging* in all children from Reception to Year 6 and their ability to articulate this spontaneously in a variety of ways. The headteacher is an asset to the school. He and the deputy headteacher provide dynamic leadership for a well qualified experienced and enthusiastic staff. Recent developments to the school building provide scope and space to develop and showcase the enriched curriculum beyond subject and classroom boundaries. Staff morale is very high and there is an endemic team spirit among the adults that is mirrored by the children in the way they relate to adults and to each other. Everyone has a role to play in this school, and it shows. The school secretary sets the scene with her welcoming smile and the school grounds and buildings are excellently maintained. There are very good relationships with parents, with the parish and the local community and many external agencies. Governors operate a proactive partnership with the headteacher and senior leadership staff.

The effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvement since the last Inspection

Aspects identified for improvement in the previous S48 inspection, (15 & 16 March, 2007), have been addressed. The school has:

- Monitored teaching and learning with feedback and clear areas for development;
- Monitored Collective Worship (CW) with clear areas of strength and development.

The capacity to make further improvements

The school's capacity for improvement is secure as a result of:

- The commitment and determination of all staff to ensuring St. Mary's is an outstanding school;
- Clear succession planning for Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members and a planned opportunity to 'reflect and renew' at a staff Retreat-style day;
- 3 newly appointed Catholic members of staff for September 2010 + induction training;
- On-going Curriculum Professional Development (CPD) plans in RE & assessment for all staff;
- Parental voice and involvement in improvement measures through questionnaire consultation.

How might the school further improve the provision of Catholic education?

Celebrate, and promote widely, the very rich Christian culture of the school by:

- Ensuring the very good website reflects the strong Catholic witness of the school *in action*;
- Recording special moments of grace from each class in a 'school prayer book' or similar type publication for *take-home* and wider distribution;
- Encouraging children to assimilate familiar key CW techniques and resources in their own outreach work with others e.g. the *Stephen Lawrence Education Standard* work.

The Catholic Life of the School ~ Leadership and Management

How effective are Leadership and Management in developing the Catholic life of the school?

This is a happy and confident school where all adults are highly aware of their contribution to its overall success. The headteacher is a key figure in empowering others to be innovative and creative in exploring their hidden talents. He and the deputy headteacher have a very positive professional working relationship with clear and strong ideas about the potential of an enabling environment, a broad curriculum and positive personal relationships. Their commitment is outstanding and it promotes self-assuredness in colleagues. Governors play a pro-active role the life of the school through their involvement in induction sessions with new parents, liaison with SLT and monitoring of Teaching and Learning, as well as being represented at every school celebration or special event. Working with the SLT, with parents and parish, governors have established an impressive fund-raising culture to support key improvement projects. A high level of effort is invested in the creation and maintenance of a calm and respectful ambience where each individual is supported nurtured and celebrated. Staff and children are very proud of their school and both readily articulate reasons why they love to be here. Parents appreciate the school's strong Christian values that impact so noticeably on the personal, spiritual and social development of their children. Relationships between the school and parish are very good. The Parish Priest is a keen participant in the social as well as the liturgical and sacramental life of the school and he is well known to staff and children and their families.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL ~ COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How good is the quality of Collective Worship?

Collective Worship (CW) is outstanding and provides a model that could be shared with many schools. The CW policy ensures a planned range of formal and less formal settings for prayer and acts of worship. Themes from '*Here I Am*' and special events in the liturgical calendar provide the focus for these gatherings and an 'ethos statement' is presented as key inspiration at the start of the week. CW themes are incorporated cross-curricularly and creatively throughout the school thereby providing opportunities for on-going reflection or reminders at age-appropriate and many enjoyable levels. Themes are also further extended during Circle Time where children are helped to assimilate key messages and formulate personal opinions and attitudes. Music, art, dance and ICT are all used in dynamic acts of worship that engage children's and staff interest and inspire deep thought and reflective response. Children of all ages readily participate by composing and leading prayers, singing solo or in groups, using mime or gesture and with obvious reverence and respect. At the close of CW on the theme of 'God's Treasures' in the Foundation Stage, the spiritual delight of the children was palpable as they sang and gestured '*Our God is a great big God!*'

The Parish Priest makes a significant contribution to the community because he radiates the same *enabling* and affirming attitude that applies throughout the school. Welcoming the Y3 class to the weekday Mass in church for instance, during this inspection, six children had their first 'taste' of being altar servers with the celebrant as their trusted and patient guide. School records indicate his very full commitment to whole school masses and other liturgical and sacramental events. The prayer life of the school is carefully planned, nurtured and affirmed. Each class has its own morning, noon and end-of-day prayers composed by the children and every classroom has a prayer focus. At lunchtime, staff gather and pray 'Grace before meals' with the children before food is served. Prayer, CW and liturgy are fully inclusive in this school and there is a need for this to be reflected in the school's excellent website and in some form of school prayer book or similar publication for distribution beyond the school gate.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ~ ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RE

How well do pupils achieve in RE?

Pupil achievement in RE is outstanding. Some concerns voiced in the pre-inspection analysis (PIA) about value-addedness in curriculum RE were quickly dispelled by the obvious progress evident in children's written work, by the ability and enthusiasm of children to communicate their interest and knowledge of RE in every age group, by their familiarity with scriptural references and stories, and particularly by their fluency in *religious literacy*. From Reception to Y6 the standard of specialist vocabulary, turn of phrase and body language indicates a secure grounding in spiritualised learning. In a Y6 SRE lesson, girls *and* boys showed singular levels of maturity as they debated openly with each other and with their teacher on a grown-up theme. The practice of thinking skills is a school norm. Even when homework/research activities, for instance, involve distilling information from the Internet or elsewhere children are still expected to explain their new knowledge in their own words and to consider how it can/might alter their personal opinions or attitudes. Feedback from senior school about past cohorts of children from St. Mary's makes consistent reference to their mature attitude and to their significant numbers among the candidates who present themselves for the sacrament of Confirmation at the age of 13. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress in RE for several reasons: an intuitive sense of belonging in a calm and supportive environment; the exceptional caring behaviour of all children towards each other; and because of a devoted and exceptional team of support staff.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ~ THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN RE

How effective are teaching and learning in RE?

The quality of teaching is good and very often outstanding throughout the school. Teachers' high levels of knowledge of the Faith and expertise in teaching it, together with careful planning and evaluation of learning ensure that lessons are interesting, vibrant and relevant. The deputy headteacher/Foundation Stage teacher is the subject leader for RE. Her own outstanding classroom practice and innovative commitment to school choir, to weekly assembly and to school-wide music sessions are valued by colleagues. Consistent monitoring of teaching and learning by the SLT and the open and honest discussion about performance enables all staff to focus on improvement.

Relationships in class between staff and children are mutually respectful so that opportunities for learning are maximized, behaviour is exemplary and pupils enjoy their lessons. The Friday assembly on the Golden Book rewards scheme conveys a range of expectations to which all children can subscribe and hope to succeed. They are as varied as being awarded a pen for showing consistent neatness when writing with a pencil to being cheered as 'grown-up' for having accepted a bit of leg-pulling with a smile and a giggle. Likewise, feedback in exercise books often extends the learning by engaging in dialogue with a child. The majority of parents and carers take an active interest in their children's work in RE especially when homework tasks invite family discussion and opinion. The school is poised to adopt a new RE scheme, *'The Way, The Truth and The Life'* from September 2010 together with its integral assessment system and whole staff training. This augurs well for continual improvement and development in teaching and learning in the subject.

How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of pupils?

The RE curriculum fulfils diocesan requirements. It is organised around the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, and the beliefs, celebrations and way of life of Catholics who follow that teaching. Full advantage is taken of opportunities to develop learners' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and to develop skills using ICT in RE. Music and art play a big part in enriching the learning in RE. In all classes, pupils are encouraged to make realistic links between the topic of the RE lesson and the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Teaching about Other World Faiths (OWF) is very well organised and sourced from a whole-school published programme by the Salford Diocese. The adoption of the whole school SRE programme *'In The Beginning...'* with the approval of parents and governors, ensures that SRE work recognises the 'shared responsibility between home and school' and is 'comfortable to all those who are involved in the programme'.

The school has an extensive record of involvement in neighbourhood activities, weekly musical theatre, inter-school events, residential visits, visiting speakers, and multi-cultural thematic weeks. The contribution of the RE curriculum towards translating these experiences into developing a social conscience in children and their families is outstanding. The School Choir, for instance, enjoys limelight concert occasions as well as singing at local senior citizen parties; the Racial Harmony Group enables hands-on encounters with pupils from a school in a different setting and ethnic mix; email links with pupils from two Romanian schools extend appreciation of cultural and language differences; connections with a parish in East Timor through the former school chaplain evoked unique fund-raising energy in pupils to support a classroom for disadvantaged children; similar generosity and response followed a plea for 'books for Africa' from a teacher friend. The school has just completed its first year of work towards the Stephen Lawrence Education Standard.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ~ LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF RE

How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all pupils in RE?

Leadership of the subject RE is firm, competent and committed to the school's Catholic mission and to the faith development of pupils. The inclusion of all learners is central to its vision through its belief that all are created in the image of God. This genuine care about faith formation extends into senior school where past pupils are sponsored by current St Mary's pupils for the Y10 annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. Through its monitoring and review procedures, the SLT has a well-grounded understanding of the quality of its provision in RE and it is pro-active in its succession planning for specific age groups and individual needs. Following a recent diocesan training day on 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' the school decided to purchase the resource for use from September 2010. RE is a constant feature in the School Development Plan and has a defined share of the budget. RE Resources are plentiful, varied and stimulating. Positive relationships between all staff and unity of purpose in caring about children are so secure that the school is in a very strong position to continue to be an outstanding school.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS	1	Outstanding
THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL		
<i>How effective are Leadership and Management in developing the Catholic life of the school?</i>	1	Outstanding
<i>How good is the quality of Collective Worship?</i>	1	Outstanding
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION		
<i>How well do pupils achieve in RE?</i>	1	Outstanding
<i>How effective are Teaching and learning in RE?</i>	1	Outstanding
<i>How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of pupils?</i>	1	Outstanding
<i>How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all pupils in RE?</i>	1	Outstanding