

DIOCESE OF LEEDS



DIOCESAN BOARD FOR INSPECTIONS

SECTION 48 FINAL REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Swires Road, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX12ER

School URN	107546
School DfE Number	381 3308
E-mail address	admin@st-marys-halifax.calderdale.sch.uk
Chair of Governors	Mgr David Smith
Headteacher	Mr Mark Brennan
RE Subject Leader	Mr Mark Brennan
Date of Inspection	28 th - 29 th June 2012
Section 48 Inspector/s	Mrs D A Hamer Accompanied by Mrs M Bannister

INTRODUCTION

Under the requirements of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with the Leeds Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections, one inspector carried out the inspection of St. Mary's Catholic Primary School. A trainee inspector, Mrs Madeleine Bannister, accompanied the Lead Inspector. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic Education. The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisors and Inspectors.

The inspector observed a sample of 6 RE lessons, 6 acts of class Collective Worship and a whole school Mass. Meetings took place with the Headteacher/RE Manager, Parish Priest/Chair of Governors and the Safeguarding Governor. Formal discussions took place with the School Council, the SENCO and 2 Learning Mentors as well as with a group of parents. The inspector examined a wide range of documentation including:

- School Self Evaluation document;
- School development plan;
- RE action plan;
- RE Manager's file;
- Tracking data;
- Assessment and monitoring data;
- Samples of moderated work;
- Minutes of governors' meetings;
- Parent/pupil consultation questionnaires;
- Pupils' workbooks.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work, looking in detail at the following:

1. The accuracy of assessment;
2. The quality of provision for SEN pupils and ethnic minority groups;
3. The effectiveness of the RE tracking system;
4. The quality of Collective Worship;
5. Systems established for monitoring and evaluation by governors and senior leaders.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a slightly larger than average sized primary school serving the parishes of St Mary's, St Alban's and St Columba's in Halifax.

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a significant turnover in staff and 4 more appointments have been made for the school year September 2012. The headteacher, who is also the Religious Education Manager, has been in post since 2009. The deputy headteacher was appointed in 2010. Of the 13.6 teachers (fte), 10.6 are Catholic with 2 holding the CCRS certificate. In 2008, the school's pupil admission number reduced to 40 and this has been accompanied by a fall in Catholic pupil numbers from approximately 89% in 2009 to 64% in 2011. The school currently has 283 pupils on roll from a wide diversity of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Leadership has focused on rising to the challenge of maintaining a distinctive Catholic environment/ethos whilst celebrating the diversity of its school family.

The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups (46%) and the number of pupils with English as an additional language (41%) are both high, being almost twice the national average. IDACI data for the school indicates 59% of pupils come from the four most deprived areas of Halifax with 27% of pupils coming from the least deprived areas. Both the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and the percentage of pupils on the school's special educational needs register are lower than the national average.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection Grades: 1 is Outstanding, 2 is Good, 3 is Satisfactory, 4 is Inadequate

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

2

This is a summative judgement based on the 2 judgements below: Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils, provision for Catholic education (includes effectiveness of leaders and managers) and capacity for sustained improvement.

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS, PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

2

CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

2

Main findings

St Mary's is a Catholic Primary School where the motto 'A community where we live, learn and laugh together in God's love' is lived out on a daily basis in all aspects of school life. The drive and passion of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, SLT and governors, is a testament to the fact that this is a good school which continues to strive for excellence in all it undertakes.

The school provides good quality Catholic education and has several outstanding features. Outcomes for pupils, provision for Catholic education and capacity for sustained improvement are all good. The school is outstanding in promoting Community Cohesion, in its collaboration with external partners to support pupil well-being and the ways in which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.

The Headteacher is an experienced and excellent role model, valued by governors and parents alike. While recognising the past successes of the school, governors acknowledge changes in leadership style were needed to drive standards forward; they are confident that the relatively new senior leadership team is bringing about these improvements. For example, developments in RE tracking and assessment procedures are supporting greater accuracy in monitoring and evaluation, and in turn providing governors with a more informed understanding of strengths and areas for development in the standards of Religious Education and Catholic Life provided by the school.

Leadership and management are proactive and enthusiastic in their commitment, encouraging the whole school community to live out gospel values in their daily interactions. A strong sense of Catholic mission permeates all aspects of school life; staff are committed to providing pupils with extended opportunities to grow and develop into

young people with a strong sense of personal worth and an awareness of their responsibilities towards others. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they are happy, enthusiastic and are justifiably proud of their school. All pupils say the school is, 'friendly and welcoming; new children are supported and cared for'. A Year 6 boy stated, "In the Reception classes teaching is precise but simple enough to understand, but by Year 6 teaching is deeper and we are all involved in learning; no one is left out."

A member of the School Council said, "Our teacher cares deeply about God, she pushes us quite a bit and gives us challenges but also makes it fun."

Pupils value initiatives allowing them to take on responsibilities e.g. Year 6 Buddy System and class monitors and opportunities to 'learn about our own faith and other faiths; we need to understand other people's lives so we can get on' (Year 6 boy). Parents recognise and value the considerable improvements the school has made in recent years and state 'staff are approachable, the school provides good communication and any concerns are dealt with promptly'.

The school has effective partnerships with the Parish Priest Mgr David Smith along with Fr Lister and Fr Mahady. A Catholic Care Worker and a range of external support workers support and enhance provision for pupils' health and well-being and to support families. The dynamic of this pastoral support and the links with the parish play a crucial role in supporting the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils.

In a short space of time, the school has experienced considerable change in:

- Staffing, especially in key posts;
- Admission numbers and decline in Catholic numbers;
- Pupils' cultural and faith backgrounds;
- RE scheme of work;
- Sex and Relationships Education;
- Assessment procedures;
- Tracking procedures and data analysis;
- First Sacraments programme;
- Formal observation schedules.

This is a school where governors and leaders are in the early stages of a significant process of change and development. Whilst some changes to practice are not yet fully embedded, they are beginning to have an impact.

WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Continue to improve the use of attainment data so that it can identify more clearly the weakness and strengths in religious education;
- Implement fully the new Sex and Relationship Education scheme;
- Continue to improve marking procedures so that pupils have 'next steps for improvement' available to them on a consistent basis;
- Ensure that class Collective Worship is of the same high standard evidenced in whole school Collective Worship.

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups.

2

As evidenced by RE baseline assessment, attainment on entry is well below average. Pupils make particularly good progress in Foundation Stage. Good teaching by staff with a sound subject knowledge ensures that pupils are religiously literate and have appropriate RE knowledge and skills by the end of Foundation Stage. This momentum continues with all pupils making at least good progress by the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Attainment tracking, introduced in Summer 2011, evidences that pupils as a whole are attaining above average expectations, with 74% of all pupils reaching Level (L) 4C+ in Year 6; 96% of Catholic children achieve L4C+. Muslim children perform relatively well given their EAL challenges and family faith backgrounds with 100% achieving L3 or above by Year 6. In 2012 children with special educational needs achieved well as 43% reached L4 in Year 6. Gender differences are negligible. These figures are impressive given the challenges involved in attaining beyond L3 in RE.

The majority of pupils are keen to do well, apply themselves diligently in lessons and work at a good pace. They seek to produce their best work and are interested and enthusiastic about their learning. An improved marking system is allowing pupils to take greater note of teachers' feedback in order to raise the quality of their work. The school correctly identifies the need to include 'next steps' advice in marking. The school carefully identifies pupils with special educational needs. Efficient systems and individualised programmes offered via the SENCO and learning mentors support these pupils so that their specific needs are met and enable them to make reasonably good progress (e.g. nurture groups, transition programmes, 'worry/calm' boxes and IEP targets). Pupils from ethnic minorities and different faith backgrounds are also supported; ensuring appropriate progress is made despite limited religious experience and vocabulary.

Pupils take on responsibilities and participate constructively in the Catholic life of the school beyond routine lessons and activities. Key Stage 2 pupils particularly are reflective and enquiring, confident and ready to express their own views and beliefs. They understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important for many people and show interest in the religious life of others. The majority of pupils are considerate towards others and caring to anyone in apparent need. They show signs of responding to the needs of people beyond the school e.g. Cafod appeals, Guide Dogs, Good Shepherd Appeal and the Theodora Trust. Pupils show an understanding of the need to forgive, to be forgiven and have a good understanding of right and wrong.

During Collective Worship pupils act with reverence and are keen to actively participate. They sing enthusiastically, reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence. By the end of Key Stage 2 they have a good understanding of the religious seasons and feasts and are becoming skilled in the use of scripture, formal and informal prayer and religious artefacts. Pupils are at ease when praying with their school community and appreciate what is taking place; children show reverence and respect towards the faith beliefs of others, valuing visits to the local Mosque during 'Islam Week' and a Hindu temple in Bradford. The Year 5 retreat to Myddelton Grange, the successful use of the enthusiastic school choir and talented orchestra to enhance liturgy and regular class Mass attendance, where pupils take a leading role, are examples of opportunities provided allowing pupils to greatly contribute towards and benefit significantly from the Catholic Life of the school; this is a strength of the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
Taking into account:	
• the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
• the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
• pupils' attainment in Religious Education	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	2

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic education.

2

Across the school, the majority of teaching is of a good standard with examples of outstanding practice in Key Stage 2. Teaching strategies are effective in ensuring that pupils are motivated and engaged thus enabling good progress and learning to be made. The majority of lessons observed were at least good, being well planned, had differentiated tasks and a good pace was maintained. Where teaching was outstanding, lessons incorporated strong subject knowledge, a range of teaching styles, collaborative learning tasks, effective use of assessment for learning (AFL) strategies and challenging and imaginative activities. High expectations balanced with a sense of humour engaged the learners and made challenges more fun. Where teaching was less effective, the pace of the lesson was slow or teachers talked for too long, the pupils lost concentration and progress slowed. When lessons were pitched wrongly, children struggled to understand what was being asked of them and interest waned.

In Year 6, during a lesson about Saints, pupils successfully used 'hot seating' and prior learning to ask probing questions. In response, pupils were highly articulate, spoke confidently and were impressive in the way they voiced informed, often mature, opinions and empathised with the saints' characters and challenges.

Year 5 pupils successfully employed higher-level skills such as brain storming and talking partner strategies, group research via net-books and use of prior learning as they explored and reflected on the variety of different beliefs in our country. High expectations and the sharing of success criteria supported pupils in accessing higher grades. A pupil said, "RE lessons are always fun and interesting, I have learnt a lot about the Catholic faith this year."

Key Stage 1 pupils responded well to visual stimulation. In one class puppets and story cards were used effectively to dramatise the story of St Peter and the man who could not walk and in another class story boxes and elements of Godly Play encouraged engagement in age appropriate Gospel stories. Children in the Reception class were excited about their role-play corner containing a large fishing boat, nets and many fish. One child said, "That's Peter's boat, we are catching fish. I made a fish 'promise card'." All the children could read their 'promise cards' and understood that they were to be presented at Mass on the feast of SS Peter and Paul.

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was seen in the happy relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils willingly cooperated and supported each other. RE lessons always commenced with the lighting of a candle, demonstrating that the lesson was special and focused children on the distinctive nature of RE in a Catholic school.

The many and interesting displays in public areas, particularly the entrance area, strongly reflected the ethos of the school; effective RE displays and attractive RE focal points in most classes enhanced learning e.g. the stained glass windows, the mosaic of St Mary and 'The Church is born' (Pentecost). Having a beautiful prayer garden based in the centre of the building gave a constant reminder of the mission of the school.

With the adoption of a new RE scheme in 2011, the school adapted their assessment procedures in line with Diocesan guidelines. Three times per year tasks linked to 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' RE scheme are used to assess pupils' work. In Summer 2011 a tracking system was introduced allowing the RE Manager to have a closer overview of individual and cohort data; over time, the termly collation of data will allow for a more robust evaluation of standards. The school has correctly identified the need to continue moderating pupils' work both in-house and with other local schools to confirm accurate and consistent levelling. Assessment has been correctly identified by leadership as an area for continued focus and development.

The Religious Education curriculum is enriched through imaginative and well-planned opportunities to capitalise on the expertise within and beyond the school. This leads to learning that is often stimulating and memorable. The RE curriculum successfully meets the needs of particular groups and provides good opportunities for spiritual and moral development. It raises pupils' awareness of other faiths/cultures reflecting the diverse school community. A Y6 pupil said, "RE helps you learn about other religions and helps you with your faith. It shows you how to improve your community and Collective Worship gives you a time to pray."

The Collective Worship themes used were consistent with the Catholic character of the school and responsive to the religious diversity among pupils. Pupils with different religious beliefs are assisted and supported in prayer rituals. Whole school liturgies and celebrations of the Eucharist are of a high standard as evidenced by a Mass on the feast of SS Peter and Paul. Mgr Smith says that class Masses in church are always well planned and pupils' behaviour is reverent and prayerful. However, observed class based Collective Worship was mainly satisfactory with evidence of some good practice across the school. When successful, Collective Worship contained all the key elements of liturgy and involved the children in active participation. However some acts of worship were too teacher directed and tended to become an RE lesson. In these instances children became passive and unresponsive.

Provision for Sex and Relationships Education has recently been reviewed and, in consultation with parents, a new scheme called 'A Journey in Love' is to be adopted in September 2012. Puberty talks take place in Year 6.

All staff members have completed Safeguarding training and strong procedures have been put in place to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. Pupils speak of feeling safe at school, know whom they can turn to for help and advice and speak confidently of ways to deal with bullying.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching in Religious Education.	2
The use of assessment to support learning in Religious Education.	3
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs.	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	3

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School.

2

The school's leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. There is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the Catholic mission of the school is a priority along with the spiritual and moral development of pupils. This is reflected in the school improvement plan, self-evaluation form, governors' minutes and other documents. Leaders and managers conduct a range of monitoring activities relating to provision and outcomes and their analysis provides a basis for diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The collation and analysis of data had been increasingly helpful towards this end. The school's improving standards in quality of teaching and learning, the calm and spiritual ethos and the generous enthusiasm of all staff stems from good leadership and management.

Governors make a considerable contribution to the work and the Catholic dimension of the school e.g. in reviewing the RE policy and RE curriculum and approving the New SRE scheme. They are increasingly well organised and thorough in their approach. Improving systems within the school are supporting governors' greater involvement in strategic evaluation and analysis. In discharging their statutory and canonical responsibilities, they keep the work of the school under review and act upon their findings. Governors are flexible and adapt to new ideas, supporting the work of the staff in improving outcomes for all pupils. Leaders and governors have good communication with parents; they listen and respond to queries and suggestions and take particular note of replies to regular parent questionnaires. They are confident in being able to provide high levels of challenge to hold the school to account and respond to the stakeholders.

The school participates fully and actively in developing and implementing a variety of partnership activities e.g. Calderdale cluster of schools training days and collaboration with the Catholic High School in Huddersfield. These activities themselves, and the resulting improvements in the school's provision and leadership and management, make an excellent contribution to pupils' achievement and well-being. Pupils benefit significantly and develop exceptionally well in a number of areas which the school alone could not provide. The wide range of school clubs, Inset in Safeguarding and use of SEALs tracking, working with Catholic Care and other social services has been very effective in supporting pupil well-being. The school is outstanding in its pursuit of Community Cohesion, this is very effectively promoted and understood and acted upon by all the school staff. Sacramental preparation is led by staff from the school supported by the Parish Priest.

Funding for RE is endorsed by the governors who also have in place an ‘individual class link’ initiative which includes visits by governors designed to increase their overall awareness and understanding of the Catholic life of the school and RE.

These are the grades for leadership and management

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	2
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	2
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met.	2
How well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being.	1
How effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.	1