



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ABBEY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 20th – 21st September 2012
Reporting Inspector Mr Denis Cody

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Simon Bragington
School address	Sutton Rd Erdington Birmingham B23 6QL
Telephone number	0121 373 1793
E-mail address	j.tallon@abbeyrc.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2008
DFE School number	330/3318
Unique Reference Number	103422
Headteacher	Ms Julie-Anne Tallon

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by one 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 two full RE lessons with the 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 of governors, staff, and parish priest. He attended a school Mass, observed a school assembly 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 learning journals. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence of notable teaching and learning in RE, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

Abbey School is a larger than average size Catholic primary school with a two form entry. It serves the parish of St Thomas and Edmund of Canterbury (known as Erdington Abbey) in Birmingham. The school has a mixed catchment area in terms of its social and economic makeup, and its deprivation index is slightly above the national average figure. 88% of the pupils are baptised Catholics. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 31%, above the national average figure. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly below average as is the number with special needs and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry is below the national average overall.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation the school judges itself to be an outstanding Catholic school where 'religious education, based on the Catholic faith tradition, permeates, influences and sustains the whole education process and purpose of the school.' In terms of its whole school vision and commitment to promoting all aspects of Catholic life and religious education this judgement is justified. Teaching, learning and pupil attainment and progress in RE are all judged to be good. These judgements are based on sound evaluation and analysis and therefore are also justified. To drive forward the process of self-evaluation, to which the school leadership team is committed, it should continue to develop formal procedures to assess the quality and impact on pupils of its Catholic life and religious education.

School self-evaluation

The school leadership team promotes a culture of self-evaluation which informs its understanding of the school and its needs and provides a solid foundation for school improvement. The judgement that teaching and learning are good is based on a programme of observation and review led by the RE co-ordinator. Teachers' planning and children's work is scrutinised and pupil interviews are held. Together with an RE link governor, who reports back to the governing body, the RE co-ordinator has carried out learning walks and classroom visits. The outcomes are examined by the senior management team to identify strengths and areas to be

developed which are then shared with staff and incorporated into whole school action planning with dates for further review.

This term RE has been added to the school's programme of lesson observations. The same rigour will be applied here as was the case in literacy and numeracy observations last year. Issues for development as well as strengths are highlighted, target dates for review agreed and where appropriate support from the RE co-ordinator will be provided in the course of the year. The outcomes of these observations will also be used to inform future RE action planning and staff training.

The RE co-ordinator has also introduced a skills audit this term, in which teachers have identified aspects of RE teaching about which they feel most and least confident. The results of this audit will further reinforce the school's understanding of the quality of its RE teaching and will enable individual support and whole school training to be effectively planned and delivered.

Analysis of pupil attainment in RE is also used in the monitoring of teaching and learning. Based on last year's data the school has identified the need for greater focus on the skills necessary for pupils to achieve higher levels of attainment. Consequently this term the RE co-ordinator is planning to incorporate use of the diocesan '*Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*' document into staff training and lesson planning, and new lesson planning sheets listing these skills are being introduced. The school recognises that Attainment Target 2 especially will need to be carefully monitored.

Evaluation and review of the effectiveness of Catholic life and collective worship involving staff and governors, takes place on an on-going and ad hoc basis. Since the last inspection a whole-school training day has been held on 'the Purpose of the Catholic School,' encouraging staff to reflect on and develop current provision. This was followed up by staff meetings and led to the promotion of a child-friendly school motto which is now displayed prominently throughout the building and is known and followed by pupils and other members of the school community. More recently an audit of Catholic life has led to closer links with the parish through shared Masses, and alterations being carried out to the internal and external environment of the school to better proclaim and promote its Catholic ethos. Parental and pupil feedback is regularly canvassed through questionnaires and interviews. Details of parental views and school responses are reported in newsletters.

Prayer assemblies are observed by the headteacher and RE co-ordinator to monitor and develop quality. Evaluation of pupils' participation and contribution has indicated scope for greater opportunities for them to take the lead in planning, preparing and leading collective worship.

Sacramental preparation is reviewed annually with input from staff, parents and pupils, and adapted as necessary. Similarly provision for learning about other faiths and cultures has been reviewed and adapted to add greater depth. When evaluating the effectiveness of the RE curriculum in promoting pupils' learning, particular reference should be given to how effectively it provides opportunities to deliver the higher order skills required for learning in RE.

Teaching staff and governors are involved in the process of self-review and formulation of improvement plans. When appropriate, governors attend staff meetings and there is regular liaison between the link governors and the RE co-ordinator.

In order to build on current provision for self-evaluation of Catholic life, collective worship and curriculum provision formal procedures should be developed for each. The whole process could, perhaps, take place on a training day and be focussed around an annual update and review of the new self-evaluation document. A variety of guidance material which could be used to stimulate discussion for each of these areas is available on the diocesan education website.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and RE co-ordinator provide outstanding commitment to the Catholic life of the school. RE is well led and the co-ordinator's role is being carefully developed. All are committed to school improvement and through accurate self-evaluation they have a good understanding of the school and its needs. They are well supported by an active governing body and supportive parish priest. Therefore the school has excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for pupils at Abbey School are good, in terms of attainment and learning in RE. Baseline assessment shows most children start school with little religious experience or knowledge. As they move through the school children make good progress, so that by the end of Key Stage 2 the great majority achieve average or above average attainment. Children with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds are well-supported and they also make good progress in RE.

Children enjoy their learning, are eager to take part in lessons and are well-behaved. They have opportunities for independent learning and are fully involved in their own learning development. They take part in self and peer assessment activities and are aware of the next steps to take to move their learning forward.

Children make an excellent contribution to the vibrant Catholic life of the school, built around the school motto, *'Learning to Walk in the Footsteps of Jesus with our Friends, Family and Parish.'* They benefit from, and enjoy, the system of prayer partners which promotes a sense of belonging to a faith community and they respond well to opportunities to share the Good News with the wider community through links with neighbouring schools.

Provision of collective worship is outstanding with every attempt being made to involve parents and families. Class prayer sessions are held for pupils and families and new Reception children and their families are invited to a Sunday Mass where they are presented to the parish and each child receives a set of rosary beads. Children participate reverently and enthusiastically in acts of collective worship in the classroom and in school assemblies and Masses, through readings, prayers, dance, drama and joyful singing.

Teaching in RE is good and priority is given to providing training and support for teachers. Lessons are well planned and include cross curricular links and creative activities which the children enjoy. Children are actively involved in their own learning development during lessons through questioning, target setting and a developing combination of teacher feedback and pupil self-assessment. Pupil performance and attainment are comprehensively monitored and the data is used effectively to track the progress of individual pupils, classes and groups of children.

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.

The school's self evaluation documentation and the school's RE policy declare a commitment to meeting the needs of all children by providing differentiated activities during lessons. This is sometimes the case but very often differentiation is through outcome or the provision of additional support for particular pupils.

The RE curriculum is based on the Diocesan Curriculum Strategy '*Learning and Growing as the People of God,*' and is modified to take account of the pupils' learning needs. Use of the scheme's long and medium term plans and its assessment procedures, all monitored by the RE co-ordinator, ensure that the curriculum effectively promotes children's learning throughout the school. Provision of learning about other faiths and cultures includes a multi-faith week and visits to places of worship. Spiritual and moral development is addressed in termly mission weeks, focussing in turn on understanding the three strands of the school motto, friends, family and parish.

Recommendations

Develop current practice of self-evaluation into formal procedures for evaluating Catholic life, collective worship and curriculum provision

Use the '*National Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*' to extend the scope of RE lesson planning and provision

Provide greater opportunities for pupils to take the lead in planning, preparing and leading collective worship