



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

OUR LADY OF COMPASSION CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL OLTON, SOLIHULL

Inspection dates 8th - 9th November 2012
Reporting Inspector Mrs Margaret Dance

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Frank Mason
School address	Kineton Green Road Olton Solihull B92 7EG
Telephone number	0121 706 9508
E-mail address	office@olc.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2009
DFE School number	334 3504
Unique Reference Number	104012

Headteacher Mr Chris Bentley

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 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, and to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time, the inspector observed 3 RE lessons, completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils. She held meetings with governors, staff and parish clergy. She observed a prayer service in Year 4, a whole school Mass and end of the day prayers in Year 3/4. She 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. She looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self-evaluation including the development plan, tracking systems and teachers' planning. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about the leadership of RE which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

Our Lady of Compassion is a larger than average Catholic primary school serving the parish of the Holy Ghost and Mary Immaculate (Olton Friary). The percentage of children who are baptised Catholic is high at 95%. The children come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds with 18% from ethnic minority groups and 3.2% with English as an additional language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average at 8%. At 24% the percentage of children with learning needs and/or disabilities is a little higher than average, and at 4% the percentage with statements is well above average. Attainment is above average overall.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation Our Lady of Compassion School judges itself accurately to be a very good Catholic school with a very strong Catholic ethos, where the mission "to live as Jesus taught us" and the belief that "each one of us is unique and special" serve as the foundation stones. Its judgement that RE provision has a powerful effect on children's behaviour and attitudes, providing them with a sound basis for making good choices, is fully justified. The school correctly judges that the children's contribution to the Catholic life of the school and their response to and participation in collective worship are outstanding. The self-evaluation is accurate in stating that teaching and learning and some aspects of monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school are good.

School self evaluation

The school uses an impressive range of self-evaluation procedures to provide information on its current practice. These processes are driven by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assessment co-ordinator. Evidence for the impact of the Catholic life of the school and the children's contribution to it is gathered from learning walks by the senior management and governors, questionnaires for parents and pupils and beautifully produced pictorial records of relevant activities by each class. Book trawls, lesson observations focussing on pupils' learning and pupil interviews support the evaluation of teaching and learning. Children's work is carefully marked, with most teachers referring to the RE lesson objective, asking searching questions and giving guidance on how the work could be improved. However, the children's response to marking needs further development to provide a more formative dialogue between the teacher and the pupil.

A comprehensive programme of assessment, based on the units of the Diocesan Strategy “Learning and Growing as the people of God”, provides detailed information about attainment and achievement in RE and supports teachers’ forward planning. This has been devised and is managed by the highly skilled and knowledgeable assessment co-ordinator. Evidence from this informs the school’s judgement that, for most pupils, attainment is above Diocesan expectations across the school. Lesson observations focus not only on teaching but also on outcomes for the pupils and feedback provides development advice for improvement. Pupil interviews and book scrutinies demonstrate that pupils have good knowledge of the Catholic Faith and are able to reflect on their learning in RE and apply the message of the Gospels to their own lives.

The RE curriculum, based on the curriculum strategy “Learning and Growing as the people of God”, operates on a 2 year cycle as a response to the school’s evaluation of its particular circumstances. This includes the challenge of mixed-age classes across the school. The curriculum is subject to ongoing review and evaluation to ensure full coverage. Through the thorough assessment process units of work which pupils have found more difficult have been identified and addressed in future planning.

Monitoring of the provision for and quality of collective worship correctly judges that these are outstanding. The school is not complacent, however, and acknowledges that the wide range of hymns used and the regular use of drama to enhance worship can be developed further.

In view of the quality and accuracy of the school’s self-evaluation and the effective measures which the leadership has put in place since the last inspection the capacity for improvement in both the Catholic life of the school and teaching and learning in RE is good. Governors monitor progress through first-hand observation, headteacher’s reports and presentations by senior staff. They are very well-informed and able to validate the judgments of the senior leadership team, and provide appropriate support and challenge to the school in its determination to secure improvement.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Our Lady of Compassion Catholic School is a fully inclusive Catholic school with Christ at its heart. It considers itself to be a family where “each is unique and special” and created by God as a gift to others. The leadership team demonstrates a strong commitment to the Catholic life of the school and to the development of high quality Catholic education. The children’s spiritual, moral and vocational development is outstanding. They demonstrate very good moral values and respect for one another and have a clear understanding of the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation. Pastoral care and guidance for the children and their families is outstanding. Our Lady of Compassion has a significant number of children who have learning difficulties and disabilities. They are particularly well-catered for and make very good progress. By the example of the staff, all children learn to love and cherish one another irrespective of their differences. They feel safe and secure in school and respond well to the loving support they receive. Children in year 6 have responsibilities as prefects and act as buddies for the children in the Foundation Stage. A programme of family life education provides moral guidance according to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

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.

Pupils enjoy RE lessons and most behave well and are fully engaged in their learning. There is good work in the books of all year groups, although the presentation of work is not always as careful as it needs to be. Progress is good across the school. Attainment is at least in line with Diocesan expectations, with the most able children achieving above this level. This reflects the mostly good teaching in RE, particularly in Key Stage One, which promotes effective learning and enjoyment of the subject. Assessment for Learning is well embedded and teachers are becoming skilled in using the level descriptors to give meaning and focus to their teaching and using the tracking data to inform their lesson planning. Planning is thorough and takes account of previous learning in setting learning objectives. The more able pupils would benefit from a greater level of challenge and more opportunities to extend their thinking.

Provision for collective worship is outstanding and is a strength of the school. Pupils are fully and actively involved in a wide range of liturgical experiences and worship. They plan, prepare and lead Mass and prayer services confidently and have many opportunities to write their own prayers. They have very good understanding of the purposes and styles of prayer. There are very good links with the parish where some children serve Mass and catechists, who include several staff, are involved in sacramental preparation programmes.

Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the practices of other faiths through the study of a different faith each year and regular One World weeks. They demonstrate their responsibility for those who are less fortunate than themselves through the many fund-raising activities which they undertake.

The leadership of the Catholic life of the school and RE is very strong, supported by governors who carry out their duties very effectively, providing appropriate support and challenge for the leadership team. The governors carry out their duties in respect of the provision of Catholic education very effectively.

Our Lady of Compassion Catholic School is a very good Catholic school where all pupils benefit from the rich spiritual and moral values which permeate all aspects of school life. The children are loved and cherished and thrive in the secure, loving and happy environment which the school provides.

Recommendations

Strengthen the processes for the evaluation of the Catholic life of the school to provide a secure basis for targeted forward planning.

Ensure that the subject leader for RE provides leadership in the planning of activities which challenge pupils and enable them to become more independent in their learning.

Make the most effective use of the wealth of data available to plan work which raises attainment from good to outstanding.



Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
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November 2012

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of Our Lady of Compassion Catholic Primary School, November 2012

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school judged itself to be very good in respect of the Catholic life and religious education (RE). The inspection found that this judgment is fully justified because the Catholic ethos of the school is very strong, with the beliefs that we should "live as Jesus taught us" and that "each one of us is unique and special" at its heart. Your children are loved and cherished and thrive in the secure, happy and loving environment which the school provides. The children's contribution to the Catholic life of the school, their spiritual and moral development and their participation in and response to collective worship are outstanding. Good teaching in RE, supported by rigorous monitoring and assessment, enables the children to enjoy their learning in RE lessons, to make very good progress and to reach high standards

Through its thorough and accurate self-evaluation, the leadership team has a very good understanding of the school's needs and is committed to continued improvement. To support future development I have recommended that it should strengthen its evaluation of the Catholic life of the school to support forward planning. It should consistently provide activities which challenge the pupils and enable them to become more independent in their learning. It should also make the most effective use of the wealth of data it has when planning work in RE to raise attainment from good to outstanding.

I very much enjoyed my visit to Our Lady of Compassion Catholic School. I was given a warm welcome and your children were friendly and eager to talk about their school and their learning. The Mass was a very moving experience and the children are to be congratulated on their excellent singing. They are a credit to their school, to their families, and those who care for them.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dance
Diocesan Inspector