



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Greys Hill, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 1SL

Inspection dates 21st – 22nd April 2015
Reporting Inspector Mrs Mary Baines

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	194
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Morag Stewart
Telephone number	01491 572796
E-mail address	office.3820@sacred-heart.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2010
DFE School Number	931/3820
Unique Reference Number	123204
Headteacher	Mr Gerald Davis
Previous inspection:	2
This inspection:	2



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, the inspector observed 3 full RE lessons with the headteacher.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, the RE governor and staff.
- The inspector observed a prayer service and a whole school assembly. 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.
- Other documents such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals were read alongside the self evaluation.

Information about the school

- The Sacred Heart is a smaller than average Catholic primary school serving the parish of The Sacred Heart in Henley on Thames.
- Henley on Thames is an affluent town with predominantly private housing, though a number of the pupils' families do not share in that affluence.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 55%.
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is below average.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average as are the numbers with special needs and/or disabilities.
- Attainment on entry is below the national average in RE overall.

Main Findings

- The Sacred Heart School accurately judges itself to be good in terms of worship, Catholic life and RE. This judgement is soundly based on clear and reliable evidence from a thorough self-evaluation process. This provides a firm foundation for continuing and sustained school improvement.
- Effective leadership of the school by a committed team who share a deep personal faith is a strength of the school and ensures good outcomes for pupils' spiritual and moral development, progress and attainment in RE.
- In line with whole school improvement, planning for RE is based on a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation, clear priorities and regular review, necessary CPD then follows.
- The new headteacher has correctly identified the Catholic life of the school as a focus area for performance management and shares this objective with all staff in order to make a real impact.
- The RE team, governors and parish priest have a very wide experience which they share with all members of staff so that provision is effective and consistent across the school.
- There are close links with the parish, local and wider community which fosters positive community cohesion.

School self evaluation

Catholic Life and Collective Worship

- The new headteacher, RE team and reconstituted governing body are totally committed in their drive to improve and maintain the Catholic life of the school. This is based on a shared vision and a constant drive to live out the mission statement to bring Christ to all.
- There is an effective process of monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life and worship which celebrates success and also identifies development needs. The monitoring activities such as pupil voice, questionnaires, parent meetings, celebration books and learning walks, are carried out regularly by senior leaders, governors, staff and parish priest so that all can share in the spiritual journey and accomplishments of the pupils.
- The new headteacher has identified Catholic life as a focus for school improvement planning as well as a personal appraisal objective. This objective is shared by all staff in order to achieve the maximum impact. The Catholic life priority is central to the promotion of all other areas of the school development plan.
- The governors and parish priest are instrumental in the development of strong spiritual direction, they visit the school regularly and their guidance, evaluations and constructive criticism is welcomed by the headteacher and RE team. They are reliable friends of the school.
- The headteacher reports regularly to the governors, both formally in meetings and also informally during visits to school. This enables the governors to sustain their knowledge and judgements through a balance of support and challenge.

Governance

- There is strong, effective governance at the school which holds the leadership to account in a variety of ways both formally and informally.
- The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and ensure that they are well informed about all aspects of school life.
- The chair of governors visits regularly and therefore is fully informed about and familiar with the day to day life of the school. This ensures that the governors are in a position to make accurate judgments about ethos and Catholic life.
- Governors are fully involved in school improvement planning. They take part in setting priorities, agreeing time frames and monitoring the planning cycle to ensure successful outcomes and progress.
- The governors have recently been successful in recruiting a Catholic headteacher who has a strong personal faith and life witness. However, they are aware that, whilst there is excellent commitment from all the staff currently, there is a need to recruit more staff who are practising Catholics when the opportunity arises. At present a huge responsibility, especially regarding Sacramental preparation, rests on the relatively small RE team.

Religious Education

- The school's judgement that teaching, learning and assessment in RE are good is accurate and is validated by effective monitoring and evaluation which ensures that progress, learning and attainment are good or better.
- The new headteacher has taken on the role of RE leader so that he can have an in depth understanding of the provision for, and standards of teaching and learning in RE. This is important also because he has moved from another diocese and wishes to familiarise himself with the requirements of this diocese.
- Thorough, regular monitoring takes place according to the cycle. This includes lesson observations, book scrutinies, learning walks, planning scrutiny and pupil voice interviews. These all support the judgement that teaching is good and better which was validated during the inspection.
- Detailed pupil tracking is carried out three times a year in line with diocesan assessment focus. Evidence is gathered of work exemplars from each unit, these are analysed and attainment recorded. There are some very able pupils in school and their attainment could be higher with better differentiated tasks.
- The RE team, consisting of headteacher, deputy head and Year 5 teacher support the non-Catholic staff in planning and delivering the RE curriculum. Sacramental preparation is done by Catholic staff supported by parish catechists and parish priest.
- Careful analysis of data, beginning with baseline assessments and continuing until the end of Key Stage 2, ensures the continuity and progression of all pupils. It also identifies the learning needs of individual children.
- The curriculum is carefully planned and linked to the *Curriculum Directory*. It is reviewed annually to ensure that all units are structured around the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Catholic Church. The 'All that I Am' programme is used for family life education.
- The headteacher attends cluster meetings but the school is in a rather isolated position on the edge of the diocese and with no local Catholic secondary school to liaise with exacerbates this situation.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

- The standards and attainment at Sacred Heart School are good and better with 92% of the pupils working at or above diocesan expectations. There is no significant pattern to any under achievement. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are most often Catholics and achieve at a similar rate to others.
- All teaching is at least good and some is outstanding in RE where expert knowledge and innovative methods are in place. Teaching is well supported by good quality in-service training and excellent resources in use throughout the school.
- A variety of assessments are used to inform future planning and teaching priorities. There are secure tracking systems in place which are in line with other subject areas. Marking has been a key focus for the school and is now very thorough. The pupils are well supported and guided by appropriate tasks to further their learning and given plenty of affirmation.
- Long and medium term planning leads to the effective delivery of the RE curriculum as well as enabling opportunities to develop, enrich and enhance the children's knowledge and experience, such as visits to places of worship, to shrines and places of religious interest.
- Family life and sex education is delivered in line with the teachings of the Church through the 'All That I Am' programme. There are plans to develop this further with the input of 'Life' organisation and other suitable material.
- The pupils and staff benefit from high quality collective worship which the children are now confident in leading.
- The governors play an important role in promoting the Catholic life of the school. They are supportive and use a variety of monitoring strategies to ensure that the Catholic ethos is paramount.
- The governors and headteacher are aware of their responsibilities regarding recruitment and retention of practising Catholic staff and are actively pursuing appropriate avenues when opportunities to develop the staff team arise. The school ethos is such an important part of the everyday experience of the school it is essential that it is maintained through good appointments.
- Sacramental programmes are firmly embedded in the life of the school and parish and they are kept under constant review to ensure good outcomes for the children and their families.
- Strong links exist between the school and parish; classes attend Mass in the church on a weekly basis and the parish priest says Mass in school regularly.
- There are numerous opportunities for shared prayer and worship within the school and parish, these include Masses, sacramental celebrations, Lenten services, assemblies and phase prayer services. These ensure that pupils grow in their knowledge and practice of prayer and learn how it can impact on their lives.
- The outstanding home/school letter gives key religious information, is evangelizing in its style and content and informative about local and global needs. It also keeps parents up to date with all areas of school life and celebrates school achievements.
- There is clear guidance for staff about prayer and liturgy, the RE team support new teachers as well as non-Catholic staff. There are a wealth of religious displays and artefacts around the school which clearly identify this as a catholic school and give all stakeholders opportunities for personal and group reflection.

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 pupils have growing opportunities to plan and deliver liturgies by composing prayers, reading at Mass and assemblies. The RE team are developing this area of Catholic life.
- There are excellent relationships in school. The children respect each other and treat each other with kindness and in a caring way. They follow the school rules and are learning to be young people who have a conscience, are just and fair in their dealings with others. They have a true sense of reconciliation in the way that Jesus teaches.
- The children have a good understanding and knowledge of the Bible especially the New Testament. They speak with confidence and insight about the faith.
- The mission statement is known by all and is the basis for all that happens at the school.

Recommendations

- All governors to be involved in a structured, formal time table of monitoring and evaluation for the Catholic life of the school and RE.
- Ensure an appropriate level of challenge for the more able pupils.
- Extend use of 'prayer bags' to whole school throughout the liturgical year, thereby enhancing links with home / school / parish.