



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection

### ST AUSTIN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Part of the Holy Trinity Catholic Multi-Academy

Garden Street ,Stafford,Staffordshire,ST17 4 BT

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Inspection date	17 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup> October 2016
Reporting Inspector	Evelyn Harper

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	4- 11 years
Number on roll	202
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors Holy Trinity MAC
Chair of Governors	Canon Michael Neylon
Telephone number	01785 356765
E-mail address	headteacher@st-austins.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 <sup>th</sup> November 2011
DFE School Number	860 3468
Unique Reference Number	124361
Acting Head Teacher	Michele Hoyle
Previous inspection:	1
This inspection:	2

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#### Evidence:

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan inspector for two days who was supported by an assistant inspector on the first day.

- The focus for inspection was on the quality, leadership and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching and their learning over time.
- The inspector observed 3 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Meetings were held with governors including the RE link governor, the acting head teacher, the parish priest and the RE subject leader.
- The inspector attended a Year 2 class/parish Mass, whole school assembly, rosary group and undertook a learning walk with the acting headteacher to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' achievement and progress, RAISEonline, the school development plan, teacher's planning, class spiritual, moral and vocational (SMV) evidence books, RE and English books for the previous and current years, and RE evidence files.

### **Information about the school**

- St. Austin's is a smaller than average sized Catholic primary school. It has seven single age classes and no nursery on site. It serves the parish of St. Austin's, Stafford.
- The school is situated in an area of mixed privately owned, privately rented and social housing close to the centre of Stafford.
- The number of baptised Catholics at present is 42% (60% at the previous inspection in 2011).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly in line with the national average.
- The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium meals is below national averages.
- The number of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is above national averages.

### **Main findings**

- At St. Austin's Catholic Primary School religious education, the Catholic life of the school community and collective worship are securely good.
- The self-evaluation undertaken by the governors and senior leaders is accurate in the majority of aspects of the school's provision and is supported by sound evidence. The governors are clear about the strengths and areas for development in the school and have been rigorous in their work to ensure continued improvements.
- The staff team have been committed and determined in their support of the acting headteacher and her newly formed leadership team as they work towards developing high quality religious education in order to improve the pupils' skills and understanding in all aspects of the faith.
- The recently appointed RE leader has a clear understanding about the areas in which improvement is required and is conscientiously working towards supporting her colleagues to drive these forward.

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL:****Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes**

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is good.
- The thoughtful and beautifully presented displays on entering St. Austin's School ensure that it is declaring itself to be a Catholic school in all aspects.
- Pupils are able to articulate what is distinct about the school's mission showing understanding and awareness. They are clear about their own responsibility in contributing to the faith life of the school. This is demonstrated in the good behaviour and attitudes to learning around the school.
- There is a very happy and secure atmosphere created by a strong school team including governors, acting headteacher, school leaders, staff, children and supportive parents. Every member of the staff has a role in supporting the Catholic life of the school including a member of the administrative staff who runs the lunchtime rosary sessions during October and May. She is also an intrinsic part of the Catholic Life Team and an invaluable link with the Parish Community.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school is good. The school provides a rich, broad and balanced curriculum with spiritual, moral and vocational development as priorities. The school has just begun to implement the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile in order to further the development of Catholic Christian values.
- The children respond well to the school's provision for collective worship. During the inspection the Year 2 children were confident participants in all elements of the Mass. All year groups are enthusiastic participants in a wide range of liturgies and prayer. However, all children now need to be given opportunities to plan collective worship.
- The Holy Joes are a group of children chosen by their classmates to be Catholic ambassadors in their own year groups. They demonstrate an excellent example of the strong Catholic nature of their school. They are given the responsibility to influence the school's collective worship, are responsible for their class prayer focus and prepare the hall for school mass/assemblies. The pupils from the oldest to the very youngest are able to articulate how the Catholic nature of their school makes it a special and happy place to learn. They are very secure and confident when talking about their faith and what it means to them.
- Pupils understand the importance of key celebrations throughout the liturgical year and can explain clearly how their faith impacts on their own and others' lives.
- The older pupils are very conscientious in their guidance of the younger children. The Holy Joes in Year 6 annually mentor the children in Reception throughout their first term until they too become Holy Joes for their own class.
- Children of other faiths or none are integrated well into the school. For instance children delighted in supporting prayer sessions for the rosary where they say they take part because the meditative sessions make them feel happy. Some children who were not of the Catholic faith made the decision to attend the Year 6 retreat at Alton Castle during the inspection.

- The school now needs to implement an interfaith programme of visits to other places of worship to develop all pupils' knowledge of other faiths.
- Many of the children are active participants in the life of the parish of St. Austin's, regularly attending Mass there and acting as altar servers. They have an excellent relationship with the parish priest.
- Children are able to associate prayer with world events and know that they should pray for others as well as for their own intentions. During the lunchtime rosary group, pupils prayed about the very prevalent news of orphaned refugee children coming from Calais to be rehomed in Britain. As one child who had transferred from a non-Catholic school remarked, "Being at a Catholic school makes me think more about others and their feelings too."
- Children are being developed spiritually, morally, and in their understanding of vocation as evidenced in the high standard of their beautifully presented SMV class books.
- Sacramental preparation is shared by the parish and school. The children were very clear on the importance of the sacraments in their lives and their work provided clear evidence of good knowledge and understanding of them.

## **LEADERSHIP:**

### **Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship**

- Leadership of Catholic life and collective worship at St. Austin's is good. Governors demonstrate a strong commitment to the school and its Catholic mission. They regularly attend school events across the school year.
- The new RE leader, RE link governor, parish priest and acting headteacher have followed the advice of their diocesan RE advisor who has worked with them to plan their way forward as a new team. This has given them a sense of affirmation in their strategic direction for the school. Their strong collaboration is ensuring that standards remain high.
- The governors' monitoring of the Catholic life and collective worship means that they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. The subject leader feeds back to governors regularly and the RE link governor and parish priest play important roles in improvement planning. There is an effective schedule for monitoring over the school year and all members of the leadership team take responsibility for this.
- The governors are steadfast in their support of the school and in the plans for its future and the future of staff development. They have a robust plan for the school's future to ensure that it remains in high regard in the community.
- The governors play a lead role in the recruitment of staff. They are very astute in their evaluations of the strengths required to be part of their school body and have appointed staff who are committed to the Catholic ethos of the school. This has had a strong impact on the nature of this school. The parish priest is particularly knowledgeable about the staff of this school and knows their strengths in relation to the leading of the faith.
- All members of the leadership team are clear that the responsibility for Catholic life is the responsibility of the head teacher, senior leadership team and governors. There

is a strong partnership amongst all members of this team and they are committed to the Church's mission for Catholic education.

- There is a strong link between the school and the parish. The acting headteacher is a good role model for the faith as a parishioner within the school parish.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**

### **Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education**

- The leadership, provision and outcomes for pupils in RE are good. Lesson observations, learning walks, pupil conversations and book scrutinies evidence that the staff are committed to planning and delivering a high quality curriculum to enable pupils to develop their understanding of the Faith.
- RE is monitored by the acting headteacher and newly appointed subject leader through analysis of data, book scrutiny and lesson observations. Evaluation of this monitoring results in the development of action plans that clearly identify areas of weakness. Staff training focuses on addressing these areas. Recent monitoring has led to an improvement in the presentation of work in RE.
- Governors are strategic in their support of the monitoring of all elements of RE through meetings with senior leaders and engagement in pupil interviews. Governors have also taken part in work scrutiny and the analysis of attainment data in order to better understand the standards of pupils' work. The RE link governor is very knowledgeable in her role due to her previous experience as a teacher of RE in secondary education.
- Staff value the targeted support they are given to develop their RE teaching by the acting headteacher and subject leader. Opportunities for shared professional development have been taken with local schools. This has supported the transition of pupils from the primary to the secondary phase. Secondary staff are now given a better understanding of pupils' previous learning and subsequently are able to provide appropriately challenging tasks.
- The school now needs to work closely with other primary schools in the academy to enable staff to compare provision and outcomes in RE and to rigorously moderate the standards of pupils' attainment.
- Regular review of pupil progress and attainment by the senior leadership team identify groups of learners who need further support. Strategic improvement plans are then developed by staff to improve pupil outcomes of learners, especially those who have special educational needs and disabilities. Consequently, these learners make good progress.
- Children entering school either in Reception class or in other years are carefully baselined and their attainment in RE is often found to be low. However, due to good and outstanding teaching these children quickly progress. There are high expectations for all groups of learners and therefore most children meet or exceed the diocesan expectations of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Comparison of children's work from the last academic year to the current year demonstrate that standards are beginning to rise from good to outstanding. Children clearly enjoy their learning and wish to present their written work to the best standard possible. They are increasingly reflective when answering their teachers' written questions in their marking. The school's newly revised marking and feedback policy is having a direct impact on raising standards in RE books this year.

- The teaching of RE is at least good and at times outstanding. This is due to the development of deeper level questioning which is challenging children to extend their thinking in RE. This is well planned for in each lesson and demonstrates the school's attention to developing children's work on attainment target 2, learning from religion. As a result, pupils are skilled in their ability to justify their opinions, leading to thoughtful class discussion, enabling pupils to reflect on their learning.
- Teachers are creative in using a range of teaching devices to engage all pupils in a meaningful way. For instance in one Year 3 lesson the teacher used photographs from a previous visit to church to look at all the different elements of the Mass. The children were asked to collaborate in group discussions to comment on and ask questions about their own and others' experiences and feelings during the Mass. The children clearly enjoyed this activity and were very thoughtful and articulate in their responses.
- RE is given the required time in the curriculum and planned in accordance with the diocesan scheme. It is clear that it is given priority as a core subject and is comparable to the high standards that pupils achieve in English.

### **Recommendations**

The school should:

- Give pupils opportunities to plan collective worship.
- Work closely with other schools in the academy to enable staff to compare provision and outcomes in RE and to rigorously moderate the standards of pupils' attainment.
- Implement an interfaith programme of visits in order to develop all pupils' knowledge of other faiths.