



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

High St, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 4EJ

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Inspection dates 3rd – 4th July 2014
Reporting Inspector 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	195
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mrs S MacLeod
Telephone number	01386 446748
E-mail address	office@stmarysrc.worcs.sch.uk

Date of previous inspection	April 2009
DFE School Number	885/3322
Unique Reference Number	116878

Headteacher Miss J C Smith

Previous inspection:	2
This inspection:	1

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, the inspector observed three 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 observed a prayer 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 about teaching and learning in RE, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Mary's is a smaller than average size Catholic primary school in the parish of The Immaculate Conception and St Egwin in Evesham, and serves an area with less social deprivation than the national average. 85% of its pupils are baptised Catholics and the proportion of ethnic minority pupils in the school is 34% and increasing. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is close to average, while the proportion at school action level is below average. Attainment on entry is below the national average overall.

Main Finding

St Mary's describes itself as an outstanding Catholic school in terms of the quality of its teaching and of pupils' learning, of its curriculum provision, Catholic life, collective worship and overall effectiveness. This judgement is fully justified because in each case it is based on a thorough, well-established and accurate process of monitoring and self-evaluation. Consequently school leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas in which they can plan for and implement effective progression. To improve further, pupils' vocational development and the introduction of individual RE targets for pupils have been identified as areas for development.

School self-evaluation

Accurate self-evaluation is incorporated into all aspects of Catholic life and religious education so the school has reliable information about the performance of its pupils and the quality of its provision for them. In its school self-evaluation document, the reviews of its Catholic life and RE, and in its development plans, there is a clear link between review, self-evaluation and school improvement planning. Therefore the school's judgements about its performance are reliable and accurate and it is able to plan realistically for further improvement.

The school's judgement that almost all its RE teaching is at least good and most of it outstanding is reliable because it is based on firm evidence and was supported during the inspection. The headteacher, who is also RE co-ordinator, leads the monitoring of teaching and learning with lesson observations taking place as part of a series of developmental meetings. The planning for the lesson to be observed is discussed and particular focus

points agreed in advance. After the lesson a review meeting is held to discuss strengths and areas for development. Targets are identified and progress against them judged in subsequent observations. Learning walks, often involving governors, are carried out to help evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in RE and the subject leader completes a detailed trawl of pupils' RE work at least termly. Individual feedback is provided and issues and good practice are shared at staff meetings, and where appropriate addressed in planning future staff training.

The school's judgement that learning in RE is outstanding is based on lesson observations, feedback from pupils and monitoring of pupil attainment and progress from the very low starting point indicated by baseline assessment results. Every *'Learning and Growing'* unit of work taught is assessed for all children, and each term work from three children of different abilities from each class is assessed using the RE *Assessing Pupil Performance* sheets. The resulting information provides an accurate picture of individual and group attainment and progress over time, within and across year groups. Teachers meet with the RE subject leader at staff monitoring meetings to analyse this data, moderate and level pupil work and discuss areas of concern and how to improve teaching and learning. The quality of learning is monitored, and areas for development identified, during lesson observations, pupil interviews and assemblies and through questioning and monitoring of pupils' work. For example, since the last inspection the quality of written work in RE has been addressed and is now on a par with written work in English. Current self-evaluation indicates that to move learning forward the school should introduce individual pupil targets for attainment in RE as is the case in other key areas of the curriculum.

The judgement that Catholic life and collective worship are outstanding is supported by the procedures for assessment and monitoring which have been put in place in recent years. Using some of the diocesan self-review materials as a starting point, a series of audits and reviews of aspects of Catholic life have been carried out and incorporated into school self-evaluation. Their outcomes are reflected in the school development plan which includes whole-school RE targets whose progress is monitored by governors regarding impact and outcomes.

A discussion document was drawn up describing the characteristics of the school's Catholic life. This identified pupils' understanding of vocation and a spirit of service as an area for development and this has been included in RE and school development planning. The Catholic ethos of the school and pupils' involvement with its Catholic life have also been reviewed, leading to a decision to revisit and revise the school mission statement. The governors, through their curriculum committee, have been involved at each stage of these reviews. These procedures have been incorporated into the monitoring policy and practices document of the school, so that monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life is embedded into the general monitoring schedule.

A full review of collective worship was also undertaken. Starting with an audit of current practice, and with full involvement of governors, a revised collective worship policy was produced, a description of the prayer life of each class discussed and shared, new prayer resources purchased and staff training organised. Pupil feedback was obtained through the school council which reported to the governors' curriculum committee. Monitoring and moderation meetings were organised by the RE leader to support staff, share good practice and ensure the new policy is successfully implemented and is delivering good quality collective worship.

The RE curriculum is constantly reviewed and adapted in the light of lesson observations, book trawls and analysis of pupil attainment data. Outcomes of individual unit assessments from the RE scheme of work enable school leaders to identify which topics and learning

activities pupils are most successful with, and which need further reinforcement. This has resulted in a renewed focus on developing learning opportunities within attainment target 2, learning from religion.

The headteacher and senior managers provide outstanding leadership of the school's vibrant Catholic life and religious education. They are supported by a committed staff and parish priest, and an informed governing body which is fully involved in school self-evaluation. School leaders have a good understanding of all aspects of Catholic life and RE and a clear vision for the future, grounded in accurate self-evaluation. Therefore the school has excellent capacity to move forward.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Pupils' attainment in RE is good. The majority enter Reception class with little or no knowledge or understanding of their faith or experience of prayer. In the early years children receive a very good grounding in their religion and continue to make rapid progress and their knowledge and skills in RE develop as they move through the school. By the time they leave Year 6 most are achieving at or above expected levels of attainment. All groups of pupils including those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English show interest and enthusiasm for RE, strive to do their best and make excellent progress.

Catholic life and collective worship are outstanding features of the school. Children value and contribute to its distinctive Catholic identity and understand that religious beliefs should be reflected in everyday living. This is evident in positive and supportive behaviour, attitudes and relationships. They respond to the needs of others through charitable fundraising and older pupils take on positions of responsibility throughout the school, including leadership of the school council and house system. Year 6 pupils act as mentors and role models for younger children, for example when attending school Masses. Each class compiles its own Catholic life book recording the year's faith-based events and activities.

Prayer and collective worship are built into the daily life of the school, both in individual classrooms and whole school groupings. Children regularly attend Mass, attentively and reverently, in the local parish church. In their worship they use formal and informal prayers and also have opportunities for individual prayer and reflection. A refurbished prayer garden provides a focus for prayer and quiet contemplation. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is promoted through a well-planned timetable of assemblies focussing on liturgical themes, topics from the RE curriculum and the message of the previous Sunday Gospel. Families are invited to attend these assemblies, and family prayer is encouraged through distribution of *'The Wednesday Word'* and prayer bags which children take home.

Almost all teaching in RE is at least good, and most is outstanding. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles and deliver lessons with challenging, differentiated tasks to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. RE is well-resourced, with ICT, teaching resources and artefacts used creatively and well. Children are given clear written and verbal feedback on their work and what they need to do to move on in their learning. Staff training and development is given a high priority and all staff have attended diocesan training. Catholic teachers support their non-Catholic colleagues so that all classes receive at least part of their RE teaching from Catholic teachers. Good use is made of teaching assistants, sometimes with bilingual skills, to support children whose first language is not English and those with special education needs.

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.

Curriculum provision in RE is excellent. The school's motto, *'Through God's Love We Will Achieve,'* links all aspects of school life and learning. The RE curriculum is based on the Diocesan Curriculum Strategy *'Learning and Growing as the People of God'* and planning and pupil assessment follow the diocesan recommendations. This programme of work is adapted to meet the needs of pupils and is enhanced by a variety of additional activities to promote pupils' spiritual and moral development. Particular focus is given to Our Lady as the school patron, and the curriculum has a significant focus on scripture helping children to make links between the life of Jesus and their own lives.

Sacramental preparation is carried out by the parish priest and supported in school. The *'All that I Am'* scheme is used in Years 5 and 6 to deliver a programme of family life and sex education. Children learn about other faiths and cultures, and this area of the curriculum has been identified as one in which provision is to be reviewed and developed.

Recommendations

- Introduce individual pupil targets for attainment in RE and include RE in the annual monitoring progress cycle with numeracy and literacy
- Promote a whole-school focus on pupils' vocational development