



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Arden Road, Henley in Arden, Warwickshire, B95 5LT

Inspection dates 24th – 25th February 2016
Reporting Inspector Mr T J Hughes

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	85
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr M Davies
Telephone number	01564 792316
E-mail address	head3508@welearn365.com
Date of previous inspection	February 2011
DFE School Number	937/3508
Unique Reference Number	125711

Executive Headteacher Mrs J Le Maitre

Previous inspection: 3

This inspection: 2

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 4 full RE lessons with the executive headteacher and head of school.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- A meeting was held with the chair of governors and a parent governor.
- The inspector observed an 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.
- Other documents such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and monitoring reports were read alongside the self evaluation.

Information about the school

- St Mary's is a small Catholic primary school on the outskirts of Henley in Arden and serving the parish of Our Lady and St Benedict in Wootton Wawen.
- St Mary's is a member of a three school federation which is led by an executive headteacher.
- Henley in Arden is a small Warwickshire town made up predominantly of private housing.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 44%.
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is in line with the national average at 30.6%.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average.
- The number of pupils with special educational needs support is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with an SEN statement or education healthcare plan is in line with the national average.
- Attainment on entry is in line with the national overall.

Main Findings

- At St Mary's the provision of religious education, the Catholic life of the school community, and the collective worship are good.
- The self evaluation undertaken by the governors and senior leaders is accurate and is supported by sound evidence in the school's provision and documentation.
- The staff team have demonstrated their commitment and determination in the way that they have developed the quality of religious education in order to improve the pupils' skills and understanding in all aspects of faith.

- The pupils are confident and secure. They recognise the inclusive community in which they learn and acknowledge the impact of the Catholic faith on their lives.
- The Catholic ethos is alive in the formal teaching, assemblies, wider opportunities and the day to day routines and clearly influences the actions of all members of the school community.
- The enthusiasm and dedication of the staff, catechists, governors and parents is giving rise to an enriched life of worship for the pupils in the parish and, as a result, links between the school and the local Catholic church community are strong.

School self evaluation

Catholic Life and Collective Worship

- Since the last inspection the governors and senior staff have established comprehensive systems for evaluating what the school offers to the pupils in terms of an experience of faith.
- The work of the executive headteacher and governors of the federation has been key to the monitoring, evaluation and provision of the school.
- A regular and sturdy routine for viewing, considering, judging and reporting has been set up by the school leaders. As a result the governors participate in termly analysis of the Catholic life of the school, the quality of teaching and learning and how effectively the RE resources are used to promote understanding and progress.
- The RE improvement plan is borne out of strategic leadership and evaluation. The executive headteacher works with the governors and the RE leader, undertaking an audit of teaching and scrutinising pupils' work samples. Their findings are combined with the views of all stakeholders on the key areas of the Catholic life and collective worship. The leadership team then determines a plan, which addresses future needs and targets.
- In order to be fully informed and active contributors to the self evaluation, governors take an active role in lesson observations, work scrutinies and purposeful discussions with stakeholders. They are able to bring first hand evidence to the picture of provision and identify where the school needs to go to improve and provide a Catholic education of quality.
- Staff discussions are key to self evaluation, as during these team discussions and training, the staff determine an accurate appraisal of standards of attainment together with how their teaching influences the pupils in their appreciation of values in the Catholic faith. The views of the staff are then enhanced by the secure systems of moderation established within the federation, which allow class teachers from all phases to evaluate the impact of their work and the pupils' responses in an objective way by comparing work across the three schools.
- The programme of parent meetings and workshops provide a helpful forum for parents to express their views about the religious character of the school and what it means to their families as they grow in faith. The governors and school leaders take note of parental views when engaging in self evaluation. The recent improvement in the participation of parents in collective worship has come as a result of the school responding to the desire of the parents to understand and

appreciate the approach the school takes to the teaching of religious education and the fulfilment of Catholic life.

- Pupils contribute to the evaluation process through both pupil interviews with staff and governors and the outcomes of the 'school parliament', which actively canvasses the views of pupils and brings areas for consideration to the leadership. This is evident in the arrangements for collective worship, where the school parliament considers, designs and presents projects to develop the spiritual life of the school.
- The effectiveness of the school's self evaluation is clear, for example the need to enhance the programme for staff training to improve the content of the planning and the quality of teaching has been identified. The head of school/RE leader has benefited from the input and support of both the executive headteacher and lead teachers from the federation and the opportunities to moderate provision. Developments have then been planned and delivered by the staff team and are evident in the content of the teaching and the culture of spiritual enquiry in every classroom. An example of this is the establishment of peer discussion where pupils are encouraged to debate and question with their partners and consider how their faith might influence their conclusions and actions
- Since the inception of the federation, the elements of faith and mission across the school year have been carefully considered together with key liturgical seasons and celebrations. The school leaders share in the analysis of how the liturgical landmarks and celebrations enhance the Catholic life of the school and seek to 'fine tune' these important times and occasions through staff training, pupil participation and parental engagement.
- Collective worship in the school is developing. It engages all of the pupils and gives rise to a shared sense of vocation. Self-evaluation has had an impact on the quality and style of collective worship and as a result of staff discussions and training, the pupils' leadership and participation in collective worship has been enhanced.
- The head of school and other staff lead a prayer assembly each week where they reflect on aspects of the liturgical year, the sense of spirituality in the school and how each person's vocation can be lived out at school, at home and in the wider world.
- Pupils contribute to these assemblies through drama, prayer and music. The assemblies feature prayers that have been composed by pupils in response to their RE teaching or their contemporary reflections on the Catholic life of the school.
- In reviewing the celebration of Mass, the leadership of the school has acknowledged that Mass worship has been less regular recently. However the pupils, staff and parents draw a great deal of inspiration from the celebration of Mass for key liturgical celebrations. It is clear that the school leaders and staff team are eager to utilise the celebration of Mass to enhance the sense of spirituality in the hearts of the pupils, as well as raise their level of understanding.
- Strategic monitoring of collective worship has given rise to shared expectations of pupils' reverence and participation and consequently the assemblies are meaningful and spiritual occasions.

- In evaluating the prayer life of the pupils, the school leaders include a wide variety of prayers shared, experienced and written by the pupils. However the breadth of prayers is yet to be fully present in collective worship and the day to day experience of Catholic life.

Governance

- The governors are fully committed to St Mary's as a Catholic school. They strive for all pupils to fulfil their God given potential.
- Governors monitor the provision of religious education through lesson observations, book scrutinies and attendance at collective worship.
- Governors provide challenge for the senior leaders in school by taking an active role in the development of the school's self evaluation of RE and Catholic Life. Over time their intervention in the summative self evaluation has led to amendments and additions. For example as the school recruits new members of the teaching staff, the governors have ensured that the process of appointment reflects their aim to ensure the highest standards of Catholic provision. Induction for new teachers is firmly embedded with good guidance available through the federation.
- Governors strive to consolidate the improvements that have been made in religious education in recent years, particularly with the monitoring of RE assessments, which has been conducted more regularly by the performance and standards committee and has provided a more in depth picture of the standards of achievement in RE.
- The governors have ensured that the outcomes of self evaluation have led to tangible improvements. For example they have seen the quality of teaching in RE improve; they have instigated improvements in the Catholic character of the school environment; they have promoted and enhanced the local reputation of the school and seen the school roll double as a result.
- The governors are clear about their own needs as they prepare to enter in to a multi academy company with other local Catholic partnership schools. They recognise their capacity to make a contribution to a new academy collaboration and understand that this venture will help the school to broaden its perspective as Catholic education moves forward locally.
- The governors are eager to engage with the parish and actively seek out the views of parishioners as to the contribution the school makes. Governors attend Mass in school and provide feedback about the quality of this collective worship, which in turn has an impact on the growth of Catholic life.
- The Governors have an acute sense of the need for leadership succession and understand that entering into a MAC will provide opportunities to grow their own leaders of the future to safeguard the Catholic dimension of the school.

Religious Education

- The teaching seen during the inspection confirms the self evaluation judgement. The teaching of RE is good.

- The teachers have developing subject knowledge and are able to discuss with and challenge pupils to extend their thinking about a given topic with RE.
- RE lessons are carefully planned. Teachers think deeply about both the content of the religious knowledge and how they are going to provide opportunities for pupils to respond to the issues raised or experienced. Teachers incrementally build on the religious knowledge base of the pupils, so that as they move through the school their understanding of the Gospels, the life of Jesus, and their own faith gains depth.
- Teachers are skilled in using a range of teaching devices to engage all pupils in a meaningful way. For example in Year 1/2, the class teacher supported the pupils in understanding a lack of completeness by providing a jigsaw with a single piece missing. She then moved on and asked the pupils to visit the emotions of the 'Good Shepherd' and how he felt when one of his flock was missing. In Year 5/6 the class teacher used thought provoking pictures to help the pupils respond to the notion of 'Who is my neighbour?' A mature discussion followed considering how the young people could be more mindful of others during the season of Lent.
- The organisation of teaching is developing in its efficacy. Class teachers are well supported by additional adults in delivering the lesson and in helping the achievement of pupils at different levels. Whilst there is differentiation by outcome, few tasks are organised for the wide range of abilities and age ranges within many of the classes.
- Well structured systems of performance management, involving pupil progress review, allow classroom staff and managers to reflect together on improvements and outcomes in religious education. Performance management targets will always include clear goals for the development of the spiritual dimension of the pupils' curriculum.
- The pupils are inspired by the teaching and respond with flair and insight. They can answer complex questions and can relate their prior learning in RE to a new task with confidence.
- Pupils take great pride in their work. The quality of RE work in their books and displays is of an equally high standard to that seen in the English work. Their faith is given due respect through finely presented writing and illustration. The well established 'time to reflect' marking device prompts pupils to respond to ever more challenging spiritual concepts in the form of a dialogue with the class teacher. The school acknowledges that there is even greater scope for setting different levels of questioning within this process to better match the increased levels of maturity of some pupils.
- RE lessons regularly feature an element of prayer and pupils demonstrate a good level of thinking in their reflections. Pupils are able to verbalise their vocation and appreciate the calling of others to fulfil their role in the world through service and commitment.
- Opportunities to explore the dynamics of other major world faiths are planned into curriculum delivery. Pupils have gained some knowledge of a limited number of world faiths. They recognise that better understanding will lead to greater levels of respect.

- The sacramental programme is led by catechists, who are both members of the school staff and the parish. The pupils enjoy their sessions of preparation and relish their closer relationship with God and the church as they move towards the time when they will receive the sacraments. The teachers and support staff take an active role in preparation by supporting the pupils at their special weekend Masses.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

- When children enter the nursery their attainment in RE is low. As a result of a well planned RE curriculum, good teaching and sturdy systems of assessment and monitoring, the majority of pupils meet or exceed the diocesan expectations of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Standards of attainment in RE are high and consistently in line with the very good outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The Governors and senior school staff are fully committed to ensuring that the pupils' experience of Catholic life is rich and meaningful and will assist each child to learn about their faith and develop their skills and spiritual understanding.
- The executive headteacher constantly seeks to improve the RE provision and standards of achievement. She has the highest expectations of the staff team and the pupils. She is fully committed to the productive spiritual relationship with the parish and maximises the resourceful relationship that St Mary's has with its sister schools in the federation. The head of school/ RE leader has actively made manifest the aspirations of the school leadership by supporting and encouraging the staff team and challenging the pupils to get the very best from their faith experiences in school.
- Class teachers utilise inspirational techniques, which underpin the good teaching. The teachers and classroom support staff work well together in a reflective manner to ensure that the pupils experience lessons, which challenge and motivate. Subject knowledge in RE is growing and the desire of all staff members to improve this is notable.
- The pupils are eager and attentive in their response to the experiences provided. They display very good levels of growing spiritual maturity. They are willing to discuss their faith and consider the impact it has on their lives. They understand the presence of God in their lives. For example pupils stated that the promotion of faith made them keen to learn more about Jesus and his work in the world. Pupils know that they have been given talents and skills by God and it is their vocation to use these for the good of others. They recognise that their faith will bring them happiness and make them merciful.
- The Governors and school staff are forward thinking and demonstrate the capacity to both consolidate their effective provision and develop the school further. Training for staff constantly features in the organisation of the federation's CPD programme

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.

and enables teachers to raise their level of subject knowledge and improve their approach to the teaching of religious education.

Recommendations

The school should:

- Consider more able pupils and pupils being taught in mixed age classes by planning well matched activities within the lessons, which provide a greater level of challenge.
- Enhance collective worship by providing a greater range of prayer experiences.
- Further develop staff training to improve RE subject knowledge and consider using resources and themes provided through the diocese.



March 2016

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
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B46 3EA

Dear Parents and Carers

Diocesan inspection of St Mary's Henley in Arden, 24th – 25th February 2016

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.

St Mary's is a school with good Catholic life and RE. Since the last inspection the governors have worked hard to attain real growth and improvement. They are determined that all pupils receive a rich and meaningful spiritual experience at school and achieve their very best. They have established very effective systems to check that the school's provision of religious education is sound.

The executive headteacher together with the head of school, provide strong leadership and have established a culture of high expectations amongst the staff and the pupils. Class teachers utilise inspirational techniques, which underpin their good teaching. The teachers and classroom support staff work well together in a reflective manner to ensure that the pupils experience lessons, which are increasingly rich spiritually and which challenge the pupils.

When the children enter the reception class their religious knowledge is limited. As a result of a well planned RE curriculum, and good teaching, the children make excellent progress. The staff work well with the other schools in the federation, using sturdy systems to check the progress the pupils make throughout their school life. By the time they leave St. Mary's the children can speak confidently about their faith, recognise the gifts and talents that God has given them and how they should use these for the good of others. The children also become increasingly mature and considerate of issues in society and the wider world. Their faith is strengthened on their journey through the school and as a result their actions are influenced by their beliefs.

The school works closely with the parish and the shared programme for sacramental preparation is becoming ever more meaningful; this is reflected in the joy the pupils demonstrate as they anticipate receiving the sacraments.

I have recommended that the school should develop its lessons to better match the needs of pupils who work in mixed age classes and where there are different levels of ability in a class. I have asked the school to consider making the collective worship in school even richer through extending the prayer life for the children. I have also suggested that school leaders provide further training for the staff to support their growing skills in teaching RE.

I was delighted to visit your school and witness the very high standard of work undertaken by the children and the dedication of the staff and governors. I was impressed with the eagerness and diligence of the children and the genuine sense of faith and mercy shared amongst all members of the school family.

I was most grateful for the kind welcome I received from everyone at St. Mary's.

Yours sincerely

Mr T J Hughes
Diocesan Inspector