



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

GUARDIAN ANGELS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 13th – 14th March 2014
Reporting Inspector Denis Cody

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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| Type of School | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4-11 years |
| Number on roll | 213 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governors | Mr Anthony O'Hagan |
| School address | Hurst Lane Shard End Birmingham B34 7HN |
| Telephone number | 0121 7472782 |
| E-mail address | enquiry@grdangel.bham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | March 2009 |
| DFE School number | 330/3316 |
| Unique Reference Number | 103420 |

Headteacher Mrs Catherine Naughton

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TODAY

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 governors, staff, and parish priest. He observed a prayer service 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 a successful aspect of Catholic life in the school, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

Guardian Angels is an average size Catholic primary school in the parish of The Mother of God and Guardian Angels in Shard End, Birmingham. On the school site and with close links to the school there is an early years' day-care centre with charitable status providing care and education for sixty four 0-3 year olds. The school is situated in an area of high social deprivation and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Currently 62% of pupils are baptised Catholics and 28% are from ethnic minorities. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special education needs is slightly below the national average, while the proportion of those supported at school action is well above average. Attainment on entry is below the national average overall.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation Guardian Angels describes itself as being at least a good school and in many respects outstanding. This judgement is more than justified as the evidence indicates an outstanding Catholic school whose rich and vibrant ethos is evident in every aspect of school life; in its collective worship and prayer, in relationships throughout the school, in its leadership and its broad curriculum. Based on its accurate self-evaluation the school has good knowledge of its strengths and areas for development, which are reflected in school improvement planning. The school is rightly proud of its outstanding Catholic life and provision of collective worship, in which pupils participate enthusiastically. Together with an effective RE curriculum and very good teaching, these enhance pupils' spiritual and moral development and enable them to make excellent progress in RE across the school. To further improve its leadership and provision the school is aware of the need to develop the role of its RE link governor and to provide pupils with more opportunities to plan and lead collective worship.

School self-evaluation

Extensive and accurate self-evaluation and review processes, both formal and informal, are well-established in relation to Catholic life and RE. This provides the school with reliable information about the performance of its pupils and the quality of its provision for them. The collection and analysis of this information is led by the RE co-ordinator and discussed with senior leaders and the whole staff, with input from governors and sometimes pupils, parents and other stakeholders. This then forms the basis of future development planning through the RE action plan which becomes part of the overall school improvement plan. As

part of the annual review cycle the school's summative self-evaluation document is reviewed and updated by senior leaders and all staff, again with input from governors. On occasion in this document the school's judgements have understated the extent of its achievements.

The school's judgement that RE teaching is at least good and sometimes outstanding is reliable because it is based on firm evidence and was supported during the inspection. The quality of teaching in RE is monitored and evaluated through lesson observations and work scrutinies carried out during the year by the RE co-ordinator and senior leaders. These include feedback with targets for teachers. In addition, the RE co-ordinator maintains an overview of teachers' planning and makes recommendations and offers support as required. Consequently leaders have an accurate view of the quality of RE teaching and are able to plan staff training activities to promote improvement. The last inspection identified the need for more opportunities for extended writing in RE and for more challenging work to extend the most able pupils. These issues were addressed in subsequent reviews and have led to a more creative approach to RE teaching and closer links between RE and literacy so that extended writing activities and more differentiated tasks are included in RE lessons.

The school's judgement that learning in RE is good is supported by evidence of very good pupil attainment and excellent progress from a low starting point in terms of religious knowledge and experience. Pupils' work is regularly moderated by teachers working together to ensure that assessments are accurate across the school. Lesson observations show good teaching and motivated pupils who enjoy their work. In one lesson children were using an iPad app confidently and imaginatively to illustrate their understanding of stories they had researched from class Bibles. Book trawls provide evidence that the same quality and standard of work is achieved in RE as in literacy. Pupils understand and are able to talk about their learning and how teachers help them to learn. Older pupils can discuss their learning targets and how they know when they have achieved them. Through self-evaluation the school has identified the need for more focus on the skills identified with learning in RE. As a result greater emphasis is being placed on using the *'Levels of Attainment in RE'* to identify skill-based learning opportunities which encourage enquiry. The school has also become involved in a two year philosophical enquiry course piloting the teaching of philosophy to further promote higher level thinking skills. This has particular relevance to RE where pupils focus on independent learning and enquiry skills.

The school judges its Catholic life and collective worship to be outstanding, and these judgements are borne out by inspection. Pupils are able to talk about their contribution to the Catholic ethos of the school and how it impacts on their daily lives. Its Catholic life is at the heart of everything the school does, and as such is under constant scrutiny and review. Self-evaluation of Catholic life takes place throughout the school year led by the headteacher, senior management team and RE co-ordinator. It contributes to future planning and is reflected in the headteacher's performance management targets. The headteacher and RE co-ordinator collaborate to produce termly reports for the governors which cover all aspects of Catholic life and through which the governors are able to participate in producing the school summative self-evaluation document. The co-ordinator also makes periodic presentations to governors. However the school is aware of the need for greater governor participation in the process of self-evaluation and for development of the role of RE link governor.

Review and evaluation of collective worship is led by the RE co-ordinator. Based on experience from the previous year, together with the headteacher and parish priest she produces an outline plan for collective worship at the beginning of the year. She supports staff in planning and reviewing the detail, and also presents feedback to the headteacher

and deputy on their weekly prayer assemblies. Informal feedback is collected from pupils, staff and parents. Teachers act as critical friends to one another in reviewing classroom displays and prayer areas. In line with its aim to enhance pupils' independent learning and RE learning skills the school has identified the need to give children more opportunity to plan and lead collective worship independently.

The RE curriculum is subject to regular review. Information about its impact and how well it meets pupils' needs is gathered from lesson observations, monitoring of teachers' planning, book trawls, analysis of pupil attainment data and feedback from pupils and parents. Issues that arise are discussed at staff meetings and addressed in future planning. Recently this process has led to the sacramental programmes being updated to include greater parental involvement. The school has also identified the need for a greater focus on teaching the learning from religion attainment target and this is reflected in current lesson planning.

The headteacher, RE co-ordinator and senior leadership team, provide outstanding and inspirational leadership of the school's Catholic life and religious education. They are supported by a committed staff, parish priest and governing body. Their vision for the school and understanding of its strengths and areas for development are grounded in accurate self-evaluation. Therefore the school has excellent capacity to move forward.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Pupils' achievement in RE is good. They enjoy RE lessons and are motivated and enthusiastic. Baseline assessment shows that on entry to Reception class most pupils have very little religious knowledge or experience of prayer but make considerable progress during the year. Both boys and girls, pupils of all abilities and those who receive free school meals continue to make excellent progress, relative to their starting point, as they move through the school. End of unit assessments show most pupils are achieving diocesan expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and the great majority achieve at or above the level of diocesan expectation by the end of Year 6.

Pupils play their full part in the school's outstanding Catholic life and collective worship. Throughout the building photographs, displays and messages remind them of the school's mission and their part in it, and they are given opportunities to fulfil their role. Groups of children have recently produced a child-friendly version of the school's mission statement and written their own 'Creeds,' outlining personal beliefs. They are able to discuss the relevance today of Gospel values and how they can live them out in their lives. The school organises monthly afternoon teas for senior citizens from the local parishes. Children help prepare and serve food, provide entertainment and talk to the people who attend. Participation in charitable fundraising activities and a focus on vocation and service help them understand and respond to the needs of others.

Prayer and collective worship reflecting the liturgical seasons, Sunday Gospels and the RE curriculum are built into the daily life of the school in classrooms, key stages, and as a whole school. Pupils take part enthusiastically and with great reverence in the weekly school Mass, in liturgies, sacraments, and assemblies. In their worship they have opportunities for quiet prayer and reflection, and the use of formal and informal prayers, singing and role play. The school has recently opened a Peace Garden, providing a quiet place for private as well as whole class prayer and reflection. The parish priest is a regular visitor in school and often leads or takes part in class liturgies and supports the strategy objectives where appropriate.

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.

Teaching of RE is good and often outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are committed in their approach to RE. They are supported within school by the RE co-ordinator and in-service training is provided where required to ensure high quality teaching. Teachers employ a range of teaching styles and cross-curricular activities to engage all children and good use is made of ICT. Links are made with children's own lives and experiences within RE lessons. Through strategic questioning, the use of clearly understood targets and informative marking often carried out alongside the child, pupils are involved in their own learning and know how to improve. Additional classroom support and provision of differentiated work ensures teaching addresses the needs of all pupils.

The RE curriculum effectively promotes pupils' learning. It is based on the Diocesan Curriculum Strategy *'Learning and Growing as the People of God,'* and is supported by an extensive bank of teaching resources. Planning and pupil assessment follow the diocesan recommendations. Ten per cent of the timetable is allocated to RE. However the teachings of Jesus and the Gospel values permeate through the whole curriculum and life of the school, enriching pupils' religious experience and making an outstanding contribution to their spiritual, moral and vocational development. This is reflected in the positive relationships and exemplary behaviour exhibited throughout the school, and the way the children are encouraged and enabled to live out their Christian mission.

The school provides a safe and supportive environment for all its pupils, in which pastoral care is given a high priority. For example, it has in place an active Rainbows programme to support pupils experiencing difficult family situations.

Sacramental preparation is carried out in partnership with parents and the wider parish community. Visits to places of worship of other faiths and a Multi-Cultural Week during which speakers from other faiths lead assemblies help to promote pupils' awareness and respect for others. The *'All that I Am'* scheme is used in Years 5 and 6 to deliver a programme of family life and sex education.

Recommendations

- Develop the role of RE Link Governor
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to plan and lead collective worship independently