



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

OUR LADY OF GRACE CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Part of the Newman Catholic Collegiate

Woodland St, Biddulph, Stoke, ST8 6LW

Inspection dates 30th June – 1st July 2014
Reporting Inspector Mary Baines

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 -11 years
Number on roll	95
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Academy Committee	Mr Simon Edge
Telephone number	01782 512644
E-mail address	admin@olog.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2011 (as English Martyrs)
DFE School Number	860/3477
Unique Reference Number	140129

Principal Mr Ian Beardmore

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 3 full RE lessons and heard Mass with the school. 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. She held meetings with the chair of academy committee, staff, and parish priest. She observed a whole school assembly, a prayer service led by the confirmandi 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. She 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 the school mission and vision, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

Our Lady of Grace is a much smaller than average Catholic primary school serving the parish of English Martyrs in Biddulph, Staffs. Biddulph is on the northernmost edge of the diocese and much of it is in a rural setting. It is an area of mixed housing, some private but also a large council housing estate. This is a newly formed school since September 2013 following the closure of English Martyrs Primary School. The Principal was recruited from a neighbouring Catholic school and he is now leading both schools as executive principal. The reputation of the school has improved rapidly and numbers doubled during the past twelve months, the parish is very supportive and a new era has begun. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 39%. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 4.2%. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is 33%, the numbers with special needs and/or disabilities is 29% which is broadly in line with national average. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average overall but low levels of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation Our Lady of Grace judges itself to be a solidly good school which has improved and continues to improve rapidly. Leaders and committee members demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission, promote high standards in all areas and rightly judge leadership to be good. Collective worship is good with pupils taking a leading role in the preparation and presentation of a variety of liturgies, assemblies and meditations. The school has excellent links with the parish it serves and with the wider Catholic community. Teaching is now good and has improved greatly since the last inspection. It is outstanding at times leading to high attainment in RE. Within the context of a school which is in transition very significant progress has been and continues to be made, the judgments are accurate and reliable. Rigorous processes for monitoring and evaluation have been implemented and are now being embedded and developed. The priorities identified by the school for further development are appropriate and are being successfully implemented.

School self evaluation

There are now thorough and rigorous processes in place in order to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life and RE including an in depth analysis of pupil attainment. Regular book trawls, planning scrutiny, lesson observations and pupil interviews all give valuable insight

into current practices and provision, in addition to formal methods, informal 'drop-in' observations enable the principal and head of school to secure an impression over time. These are then fed back to teaching staff during staff and pupil progress meetings. Areas for development are highlighted, itemised in the school improvement plan and provided for through professional development targets. The school accurately judges its monitoring and evaluation of the provision for RE as good. This is due to the very effective assessment cycle which has been put in place. Teaching staff now gather a range of evidence across all abilities, level it as a 'best-fit', and analyse it to ensure that children are performing at or above national and diocesan expectations. The school has a detailed plan for continuous improvement which is supported by the diocesan RE adviser. Collective worship provided by the school is rightly judged to be good and in some areas it is in fact outstanding.

Judgements that the school made about the quality of teaching are accurate and reflect the immense amount of work that has been done since the previous inspection when teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory. Outcomes across the school are now good and better, this is due to the improved subject knowledge of teachers, increased awareness of attainment levels and the implementation of more creative teaching strategies.

The leadership team recognises and acts upon its capacity to develop and sustain improvement and is constantly monitoring and evaluating provision for the Catholic life of the school. Leadership and management are now good with the capacity to become outstanding in the near future. Responsibility and leadership is well delegated, a clear direction has been set and the school strives continually to improve and develop on its faith journey.

The governing body have now become committee members and continue to be staunch supporters of the school. They are all deeply committed to the school, are mindful of their responsibilities in upholding the Church and ensure that all committee work, staff appointments and their monitoring of the Catholic life of the school are rooted in Gospel values. They are regular visitors to the school, carry out learning walks and engage with parents and parishioners to find out their opinions. They are very effective in holding the school leadership to account in order to further improve the RE and Catholic life. The parish priest gives full support for the school, committee, staff, pupils and their families. He understands what a good Catholic school should be and, through his friendship and guidance, is determined to ensure its success and ongoing development. The pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development is accurately judged to be good because of the strong, effective leadership qualities of the headteacher, senior staff and committee members ensuring that RE is central to everything that is done in school including the ethos that pervades it. A great deal of thought and effort has been invested by the school leaders in order that the value and worth of each person is recognised and so all feel safe and secure. Pupils and adults are encouraged to listen to and respond generously to God's call in their life.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Our Lady of Grace academy is now highly effective in providing a Catholic education for all pupils. Children of all abilities are very well catered for and all children are included in the Catholic life of the school. Outcomes for all pupils are good and better, by Year 2 many pupils are working above diocesan expectations and by Y6 all pupils are. Attainment is much improved and is now good because teacher expectation is high and pupils are enabled to become independent learners. Teachers take into account variations between different groups and individuals in effectively promoting Catholic education. Many pupils

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.

learn from the Faith as well as about the Faith. Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to all aspects of school life; they are proud of their achievements and their faith and thus progress, attainment and achievement are all consistently high.

The diocesan curriculum has been adapted and personalised to meet the needs of the children. Through a much more effective marking scheme pupils now have clear guidance on how they can improve their work, learning experiences are tailored to meet their needs and a well thought out behaviour management strategy enables them to enjoy a positive learning environment. Attainment and progress in RE across all key stages is high due to quality learning opportunities that have been offered this year. Family life education follows the *All that I am* scheme. The school leaders ensure that all teaching is in line with that of the Church and there are plans to develop this area of learning further by inviting outside agencies to participate. The pupils are taught in mixed age classes because of the size of the school, the planning for this is most effective and well differentiated tasks cater for the varying ranges of age and ability, other adults support the pupils' learning very effectively.

Children enjoy a wide range of opportunities for prayer and liturgy, prayers are said in all classes daily and there is a beautiful prayer space in each room which enables the children to compose their own prayers and record them in a prayer book. From their earliest days in school pupils are encouraged to organise and lead class assemblies. This is further developed as they mature in their prayer life and plan Masses and other liturgies. The children are encouraged to attend whole school and parish Mass at the weekend. There are regular opportunities for the children to respond to those less fortunate than themselves and they do so through a variety of fundraising, charitable events for example Fr Hudson's Society and the local food bank. A new venture this year was a residential retreat for Year 5 pupils to Alton Castle, they enjoyed a spiritually uplifting, activity filled weekend which deepened their faith. The response of the pupils to the collective worship provided is excellent and is a huge improvement on previous experience. The children are now fully engaged during all opportunities for prayer, praise and worship. Behaviour at assemblies and at Mass is exemplary because they are child centred occasions and motivate them to participate.

Our Lady of Grace lives out its mission to educate all members of the school community to follow Christ and live out their faith in action. Religious education, the Catholic life of the school and collective worship underpin the curriculum as a whole and pervade all aspects of school life. The staff are excellent role models and have developed a culture of care, concern and mutual respect, which results in high quality learning and teaching.

Recommendations

In order to raise attainment in RE the school should:

- Baseline new pupils as they enter the school and create a personalised induction into Catholic teaching and learning.
- Create a portfolio of the 4 assessment strands to show clear examples of learning at all levels and highlight gaps in cohorts' knowledge.
- Ensure that marking develops and challenges the spirituality of the child and is used to assess against the attainment strands and levels.



Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

July 2014

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of Our Lady of Grace Catholic Primary School, 30th June - 1st July 2014

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.

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy is a newly formed school serving the parish of English Martyrs in Biddulph. It is a rapidly improving school which through the support of the parish community has doubled in size during the past year. It is a good school with a great deal of potential for future improvement as systems are embedded and confidence in it of the local community grows. The leadership of religious education by the RE leader, head of school and the principal is very good indeed and is given a high priority in school life. Collective worship is good with pupils leading and engaging in vibrant acts of worship. All teaching is now good and better with high quality discussion taking place about the pupils' faith. There are clear and rigorous systems in place for monitoring the Catholic life and RE.

Our Lady of Grace lives out its mission to educate all members of the school community to follow Christ and live out their faith in action. Children understand their duties and responsibilities to their faith and have a strong desire to fulfil their role in the Church. The parish priest, governing body and entire staff team are exemplary in their support for the children and the whole school community.

To continue to improve and develop we have advised the school to: create a portfolio of work to show clear examples of learning at all levels and highlight any gaps in the children's knowledge and ensure that marking develops and challenges the spirituality of the child and is used for assessment.

Throughout the inspection your children were extremely courteous, welcoming and well behaved. The school is a safe haven for all who go there and it is a spiritual oasis. The pupils have a deep love of the faith and are eager to learn more about it. Many thanks to you as their parents and carers for the support you give them and also for the loyalty you give to the school as you support it in its ongoing development.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Baines
Diocesan Inspector