



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST AUGUSTINE'S CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Part of the All Saints Catholic Collegiate Multi-Academy Company

Sandon Road, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 7DF

Inspection dates 2nd – 3rd June 2015
Reporting Inspector Mr Paul Nutt

Diocesan Inspection carried out using the framework for s48 inspections

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	230
Appropriate authority	The Board of Directors
Chair of Academy Committee	Stephen Woodward
Telephone number	01782 319504
E-mail address	office@staca.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2010
DFE School Number	861/3412
Unique Reference Number	140296

Headteacher Mr Edward Byrne

Previous inspection: 2

This inspection: 2



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 with the headteacher or deputy.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with a member of the academy committee, RE subject leader, NQT staff, and parish priest.
- The inspector observed a whole-school Mass and a Key Stage 2 *Wednesday Word* 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.
- Other documents such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and minutes of meetings were read alongside the self-evaluation.

Information about the school

- St Augustine's is an average size Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Augustine of Canterbury, Meir, in Stoke-on-Trent.
- It is part of the All Saints Catholic Collegiate Multi-Academy Company formed by 1 secondary school and 4 primary schools
- Meir is an area of considerable social deprivation
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 45%.
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 30%.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average as are the numbers with special needs and/or disabilities.
- Attainment on entry is below the national average overall.

Main Findings

- St Augustine's is a Catholic school in which collective worship is accurately judged in its self-evaluation as outstanding and Catholic life and religious education are good. Catholic life is good, but it is not yet outstanding as reliable processes for monitoring and evaluation, to determine impact and secure improvement, are not in place.
- Strong and committed leadership is evident in all areas of the school, notably in its faith life, and evidence of ongoing monitoring, feedback and support for teaching and staff development has been available throughout the inspection
- Improvement planning in all areas, especially in Catholic life, would benefit from more formal, regular and systematic processes towards targeted school improvement
- A positive engagement with community cohesion is evident throughout the school
- Academy committee members demonstrate sound knowledge of the school; engagement and commitment are evident in their regular visits and involvement with school life.

School self-evaluation

Catholic life and collective worship

- Self-evaluation of the school's work was judged at inspection as good overall, though outstanding in collective worship, where documentary evidence was available to indicate planning, analysis and impact. This judgement does not concur fully with the school's own evaluation, as monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life are not currently outstanding.
- Although Catholic life in school is very strong, there are not sufficiently structured or systematic processes in place for it to be judged better than good at this stage: there is not enough evidence of impact leading to school improvement.
- Good knowledge and awareness of the school and strong commitment to its mission by all involved produce quantitative descriptions rather than qualitative evaluations
- The mission statement, significantly displayed around the school, provides a point of reference for self-evaluation and maintenance of the quality of school life and ethos. In line with a recommendation in the last inspection, there are many valuable displays and prayer corners to support this, as well as an underused and overgrown prayer garden recently salvaged by 2 Year 6 girls with staff support.
- Daily life and routines of the school are monitored for effectiveness by staff at all levels, as well as by clergy and the link governor who visit often. Pupils bore witness to this throughout the inspection, and to the involvement of the head girl and boy in discussions.
- The prayer life of the school is good and beneficial to all pupils, individually and collectively. As they progress through the school, their understanding is enhanced, as well as their opportunities for focused personal prayer and reflection. Strong, personal engagement from school leaders, here as elsewhere, ensures that this aspect of the faith life of the school is monitored and evaluated accurately.
- The faith and liturgical life of the school are strong, with positive engagement from the clergy in sacramental preparation, governance and regular less formal visits.
- As a result of a previous action plan, a liturgy group has been set up. It provides half-termly opportunities to leadership, clergy and governors for broad discussion. Minutes of meetings were available after the inspection, though it is, as yet, too early to see the impact of the plans.
- Planning documents for collective worship have been devised, which offer guidance and support to staff for the preparation and delivery of prayerful, engaging whole-school occasions. They can also be used for subsequent evaluation and future planning.
- Senior leaders discuss the life of the school and outcomes for all children's learning and development in faith; these discussions and developments are then presented to governors as part of the principal's report, at least termly.
- Pupils contribute to the evaluation processes through school council, surveys and daily contact with class teachers and teaching assistants. They are eager to discuss the Catholic life of the school, though few were able to offer evaluation, fewer still to address the question of vocation, which is an area for development. They were, however, able to describe the significant charitable support offered by the school, locally and further afield.
- Staff continually monitor pupils' engagement, development and progress, and are expected to report on any anxieties, plan appropriately their collective worship, and

seek opportunities for cross-curricular enrichment. They are well supported by senior leaders.

- Parents receive regular information from the school and are invited to express their views through parents' meetings and occasional questionnaires; the results are collated and subsequently discussed.
- Collective worship is monitored by senior staff on a regular basis; governors and the parish priest are also very active in ensuring the quality and appropriateness of whole-school worship and weekly Wednesday Word assemblies delivered by phase.
- There are strong collaborative links between the school, the church and the parish, and good numbers of parishioners attend the regular Masses led by the school. They provide a valuable additional source for evaluation. The school is also very active in the MAC.

Governance

- Governance at the school is secure. The close links of individual academy representatives with the school, and effective processes and procedures in place for the academy committee, ensure that they offer both support and challenge.
- Representatives are very well informed about the school, to which they have a strong commitment, and recognise the quality of its ethos. They receive regular presentations from senior staff: a principal's report at least termly, together with a personal report from the RE subject leader.
- The role of the link representative, though nominally for RE, is very valuable equally in Catholic life and collective worship. She visits school regularly, meets with senior staff, speaks to the children, and contributes to the cycle of observations and work scrutiny.
- Academy representatives monitor the planning cycle effectively, and play an integral part in ensuring its relevance and delivery.

Religious Education

- The school's judgement that teaching, learning and assessment in RE are good can be validated as reliable, though there is a need to ensure consistency at all times in the use of the mark scheme, building on existing best practice.
- Religious education is strongly led by the RE subject leader, who is a key member of external groups, within and beyond the MAC, and delivers inset in other schools. She keeps abreast of diocesan and national developments and ensures that the school curriculum is relevant, engaging and thoroughly planned
- In response to the last inspection, the school has taken significant steps to develop a whole-school approach to ensure well presented, high-quality extended writing in RE. This work should continue.
- Careful analysis of performance data, beginning with baseline assessments on entry to the school, provides provision for pupils that is appropriate to individual ability and need.
- Target setting, linked to data evidence, ensures that progress across the school is generally good and well documented, and that overall attainment outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly in line with attainment in core subjects, as indicated in the school's self-evaluation. Little evidence was presented for pupils with particular learning needs and/or difficulties at inspection, though work in exercise books assuaged concerns.

- Robust systems are in place to monitor the quality and impact of teaching, providing support for individual staff if needed, especially newly-qualified colleagues through a closely-structured induction and support programme.
- Teaching is secure and well planned. The lessons seen revealed close agreement with internal evaluations over time and internal judgements. There was one example of outstanding teaching, both other lessons were good.
- There is a published schedule of lesson observations, learning walks, work scrutiny and individual conversations, conducted by senior staff, which is documented and allows termly monitoring and evaluation of standards; records were validated during the inspection.
- All classroom work is closely monitored and supported by the outstanding subject leader. Staff are given individual feedback after monitoring and key messages shared with senior team and all staff.
- The curriculum for Religious Education is full and thoughtfully planned, with clear links to the Curriculum Directory and the diocesan programme, Learning and Growing as the People of God, and pupils' spiritual and moral development. Vocational development, however, requires improvement.
- Pupils' understanding would be further developed through increased exploration of meaning and purpose in lessons.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

- Attainment in RE is low on entry to the school, but progress for all groups is good. By the end of Key Stage 1, 90% of children are working at expected levels in RE; by the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is broadly in line with outcomes for English which were at the national average in 2014.
- Pupils' learning in RE is good overall. They respond positively to opportunities to develop their own understanding through active learning, with an emphasis on engaging them to express thoughts and opinions.
- All teaching in RE is at least good, with some outstanding. Subject knowledge is secure in all teaching staff and assistants, who work together collaboratively and effectively. Lessons are well planned, with shared objectives and good use of questioning.
- Assessment to support learning, using the agreed marking policy, is reliable; a portfolio of moderated work is available, and teachers use assessment outcomes to plan next stages of learning.
- Robust tracking systems are in place; these are consistent with practice in other core subjects.
- The curriculum is based upon "Learning and Growing as People of God", assessment and monitoring on the end of unit expectations. It is planned fully in line with DES guidance, with matching to national attainment levels.
- The curriculum topics, adapted to the needs of all pupils, allow staff to explore scripture with their classes and relate content to current experiences. Community cohesion is an identified strength of the school, and is readily validated through displays and written records of charitable involvements, at individual, local and wider levels.
- The school leadership and governors continually promote the Catholic life of the school, which is strong. They serve as role models to bring alive the faith. The

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.

principal keeps the academy committee informed about Catholic life, through his termly reports.

- Collective worship is outstanding and a strength of the school. It is given a high priority and the pupils' responses and reverence are of a high order. Worship is planned in line with the school's agreed expectations, and reflects the liturgical year and pupils' developing understanding. There is a range of different opportunities for collective worship, and pupils are encouraged to take an active role, individually and collectively.
- Strong links exist between the school and the parish, and good numbers of parishioners attend the regular Masses, in church or school; the parish priest visits the school regularly to enhance, support and enrich the curriculum.
- The sacramental programme is very carefully planned and reviewed to ensure that it provides excellent preparation for both pupils and their families.
- Children understand the importance of the mission of the school. The mission statement is prominently displayed, as is a key quotation from Archbishop Romero, and adults are continually seeking, throughout the curriculum, to bring Christ's mission to all aspects of school life, thus developing and strengthening their spiritual, moral and vocational development.

Recommendations

The school should:

- develop more formal systematic processes for monitoring and evaluating Catholic life to inform school improvement more effectively;
- conduct a thorough review of vocational development in all aspects of school life, in order to strengthen pupils' understanding;
- review the curriculum to increase opportunities for developing pupils' understanding of meaning and purpose



June 2015

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

Dear Parents and Carers

Diocesan Inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Academy, Meir, 2nd – 3rd June 2015

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 Augustine's is a good Catholic school. The leadership of the principal and his deputy is very positive, giving clear strategic guidance to all the staff. The school is well supported in this by its academy committee, whose members have a sound understanding of priorities and high expectations. Catholic life and collective worship in the school are very strong. The pupils are fully engaged, enjoy their learning and feel safe and happy. When they first arrive at the school many children have limited religious knowledge but, as a result of a well-planned and engaging curriculum which is well delivered and continually reviewed, they make secure progress and, by the time they leave, have achieved good standards. They are developing a secure knowledge of Christ's teaching and understand the basic tenets of the Catholic faith. They know and can talk about a number of Bible stories and miracles and have a good understanding of the value of personal and traditional prayers. Children understand the importance of the mission of the school and know that they should act accordingly. Teaching in religious education is at least good and sometimes outstanding. Children's achievement is carefully assessed and assessments are used well to plan for the next stages in their learning.

I have recommended that the school should develop its processes for monitoring and evaluating Catholic life; conduct a thorough review of vocational education in all aspects of school life; review again some elements of its curriculum content.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to spend time in your school and see how well your children are doing. I was made really welcome by everyone, and was very impressed by the collaboration and mutual support between the school and the wider community to ensure that all the children live happy and enjoyable lives.

Yours sincerely

Paul F. Nutt
Diocesan Inspector