



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST COLUMBA'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lickey Rd, Rednal, Birmingham, B45 8TD

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Inspection dates 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015  
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	200
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Pat Cox
Telephone number	0121 6754841
E-mail address	enquiry@stcolumba.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Feb 2010
DFE School Number	330 3379
Unique Reference Number	103464

**Headteacher** Eileen Walker (Executive Headteacher)

Previous inspection: 2

This inspection: 2

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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.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the vice chair of governors, staff, and parish priest.
- The inspector 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.
- Other documents such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals were read alongside the self evaluation.

## Information about the school

- St Columba's is a smaller than average size Catholic primary school serving the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in Birmingham.
- The school serves an area of significant social deprivation.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 22%.
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 40%.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average is the number with special needs and/or disabilities.
- Attainment on entry is below the national average overall.
- The school was placed in special measures in May 2013 and in November of that year Mrs Walker, who is also the headteacher of St John and Monica Catholic Primary School, was appointed interim headteacher. At the same time an Interim Executive Board was appointed to replace the governing body, and in September 2014 Mrs Walker was appointed executive headteacher. In a subsequent inspection the school was removed from special measures and judged to be good.
- At the beginning of April 2015 the school is scheduled to join with four other Catholic primary schools and one secondary school to form the *Lumen Christi Catholic Multi Academy*.

## Main Findings

- In its self-evaluation St Columba's school accurately judges its religious education, Catholic life and collective worship to be good. This judgement is based on accurate knowledge and self-awareness.
- In terms of RE the judgement is based on rigorous monitoring and evaluation which subsequently informs improvement planning.
- However in Catholic life and collective worship formal processes for review and self-evaluation are less well developed. Therefore improvement planning in these areas is less securely evidenced.

- The new leadership team has ensured that a high priority be given to Catholic life and ethos throughout a very challenging period for the school.
- Its strong and committed leadership is a strength of the school and means there is very good capacity for continued improvement in all aspects of RE and Catholic life.

## **School self-evaluation**

### **Catholic Life and Collective Worship**

- Catholic life and collective worship are under constant informal review and discussion leading to new initiatives and improvements. Feedback has been collected from parents and pupils, but there is not yet a formal process of evaluation for the quality of provision, which would guarantee an accurate and reliable basis for improvement planning.
- Pupils' attitudes towards collective worship and their active involvement are monitored. This has resulted in a renewed focus on providing opportunities for them to assume greater leadership in their collective worship.
- Targets relating to Catholic life and collective worship are included in the school improvement plan and detailed in an RE action plan. The headteacher and RE co-ordinator report regularly to governors on progress being made in the implementation of these targets.
- Through their performance management targets all staff are actively involved in promoting the Catholic ethos of the school, and in this they are supported and monitored by senior staff.
- Planning and preparation of whole school and class based worship is overseen by senior leaders with support from the parish priest in the case of school Masses.
- In addition to classroom discussions and occasional questionnaires and interviews, pupils contribute to evaluation and planning through the school council and eco council. In discussion they understand and respect the Catholic life of the school and are confident their views and ideas are valued.

### **Governance**

- During a period of great upheaval and challenge the interim executive board has valued the Catholic ethos as a strength of the school. Catholic members have maintained a constant focus on the development of Catholic life and RE. Therefore they have a good understanding of the school's Catholicity, its strengths and areas for development. School leaders are actively supported and held to account at formal meetings and regular school visits.
- Board members are able to maintain oversight of school self-evaluation through regular headteacher reports which include updates on RE and Catholic life.
- The vice chair of the board has taken an active role in the process of self-evaluation by taking part in book trawls, observing lessons and discussing and analysing data with the RE co-ordinator.
- The production of the school's RE self-evaluation document is managed by the headteacher and senior staff, but board members are fully involved in the process. At every stage evidence and judgements are presented to the board for discussion and consultation.
- From the beginning of April 2015 when the school becomes part of the Lumen Christi Catholic Multi Academy, the interim executive board will cease to exist and will be replaced by an Academy Committee. The school has rightly identified the

importance of ensuring this new body be prepared and equipped to take on its critical role of working in partnership with, supporting and holding to account the leadership team within the school.

### **Religious Education**

- School leaders are committed to rigorous review and evaluation of all aspects of RE. The resulting information feeds into the school improvement plan and re action plan and forms the basis for future planning and development.
- High priority has been given to developing and supporting the role and status of the RE co-ordinator. The new co-ordinator has worked within the cluster group and with the RE department to ensure the establishment of secure systems of monitoring, and staff have attended courses to support assessment, evaluation and monitoring.
- The school's judgement that pupils' attainment and progress in RE are at least good can be considered accurate and reliable because it is based on careful analysis of pupil performance data including baseline assessment and samples of levelled work. This enables leaders to compare progress over time and within each year group, and to respond appropriately. There is less evidence of evaluating the quality of learning in RE and the associated skills.
- The judgement that teaching is good is validated because RE is fully included in the school's comprehensive arrangements for monitoring the quality and impact of teaching. The headteacher, deputy and RE co-ordinator have observed lessons, sharing good practice and providing teachers with feedback and advice for development. Where appropriate additional guidance and support is provided by the RE co-ordinator for individual staff.
- Learning walks and book trawls led by the RE co-ordinator have monitored progress in learning, relative standards in RE and literacy work and the quality of RE displays. These have impacted directly on teaching and learning, for example in recent decisions to increase differentiation and challenge for gifted and talented children and to extend opportunities for 'Big Write' activities in RE.
- Analysis of pupil attainment has led to certain aspects of the curriculum being reviewed, for example to ensure all aspects of learning about and learning from religion are adequately covered.
- The RE co-ordinator and senior management team maintain an oversight of the RE curriculum, ensuring continuity and progression in teaching and consistency in planning and assessment.
- Spiritual, moral and vocational education is delivered within the curriculum, but there has not yet been a specific audit of provision or its impact on pupils.

### **Overall effectiveness of the school<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- For most pupils attainment in RE is low on entry, but they make good, sometimes outstanding, progress throughout the school. This is true of all groups including those with special education needs, regardless of gender, or ethnicity.
- Pupil attainment in RE is in line with that in literacy, with all classes performing at age-appropriate levels or better.
- The school has a strong Catholic ethos which is recognised and valued by all members of the school community. It is visually evident in the building and reflected in staff and pupil attitudes and relationships.
- The school and its pupils play an active part in the life of the parish, and also in the wider Catholic community through links with other Catholic schools and support for diocesan charities and celebrations.
- Prayer and collective worship are built into the life of the school. All pupils take part in whole school, class and key stage prayer services. They behave with reverence during weekly school Masses, in which they are actively engaged through prayers, readings, singing and music.
- Liturgical seasons, feast days and key learning points from the RE curriculum are reflected in classroom displays, prayer services and celebrations.
- Teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations for all pupils. They have a creative and cross-curricular approach and use ICT effectively to promote learning in RE.
- Assessment takes place during lessons through questioning and verbal feedback to pupils. Through their planning and marking and the use of 'closing the gap' comments teachers ensure pupils are aware of the next steps they need to take to develop their learning.
- Pupils are able to assess their own work and that of their peers. They have opportunities to work independently, in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. Support is available within the class for those who require it.
- Learning in RE is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and behaviour is good. They are actively engaged and eager to participate.
- The RE curriculum is based on the Diocesan Curriculum Strategy '*Learning and Growing as the People of God*' and effectively promotes pupils' learning. Where appropriate it is adapted to better meet the needs of pupils. For example, because of the low level of RE attainment on entry, the Nursery scheme of work is used to supplement that of the Reception class when children first arrive in school.
- PSHE, SEAL and citizenship work contribute to and enhance the RE curriculum particularly in relation to spiritual, moral and vocational development, which is promoted across the entire curriculum. Global issues and questions of personal responsibility and vocation encountered in RE lessons are also reflected in the school's work as an Eco School and an International School and through support for international and local charities.
- A programme of multicultural and multi-faith education has been adopted in which each year group studies one of the major world faiths, and which incorporates visits to places of worship.
- The delivery of family life and sex education follows diocesan guidance.
- The teaching of 'British values' is rooted firmly within Catholic teaching and gospel values.
- Planning and pupil assessment in RE follow the diocesan recommendations facilitating continuity and progression in learning.
- Sacramental preparation is supported by the parish priest and involves Masses of preparation with parental involvement and retreat days.

## Recommendations

- Develop formal processes for the evaluation of all aspects of Catholic life and collective worship and their impact on pupils
- Carry out an audit of spiritual, moral and vocational education and its impact on pupils.
- Support and help develop the role of the new Academy Committee in providing challenge and support to the school leadership team in the task of leading and managing the school.



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April 2015

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Columba's Catholic Primary School, 19-20 March 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. In its self-evaluation St Columba's School correctly judges its religious education, Catholic life and collective worship to be good. This judgement is based on accurate knowledge and self-awareness.

Its Catholic ethos is a strength of the school and is evident in the building itself and in the relationships, attitudes and behaviour of pupils. They take an active part in all aspects of collective worship and in the wider religious life of the school. The new leadership team has ensured that a high priority be given to Catholic life and ethos throughout a very challenging period for the school.

The school can be confident in its judgement that teaching is good because it is based on rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Children of all abilities enjoy religious education lessons and make good progress in their learning as they move through the school. They are well-cared for, happy and secure, and speak with pride about their school.

The headteacher, staff, governing body and parish priest provide strong leadership for all aspects of Catholic life and RE in the school and are committed to continuing school development and improvement.

To help them achieve this I have recommended that they should build on their current self-evaluation processes in relation to Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual moral and vocational education; and help support and develop the role of the new Academy Committee in order to maintain effective leadership of the school.

I very much enjoyed spending two days at the school, working with the staff and children. I would like to thank everyone for their support and warm welcome. The children were friendly, very well-behaved and confident in discussing their learning in RE.

Yours sincerely

Denis Cody  
Diocesan Inspector



Archdiocese of Birmingham

**Diocesan Education Service**