



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST MARTIN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pendennis Avenue, Caversham, Reading, RG4 6SS

Inspection date	18 th & 19 th May 2017
Reporting Inspector	Maureen O'Leary
Assistant Inspector	Andrew Maund

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	183
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Teresa Jones
Telephone number	01189 375544
E-mail address	admin@stmartins.reading.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2012
DFE School Number	870/3360
Unique Reference Number	110038

Headteacher	Margot Buller
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Previous inspection:	Good
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This inspection:	Good
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Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspectors observed teaching across 7 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the parish priest, chair of governors and RE link governor, the headteacher, and the deputy headteacher and the RE subject leader.
- The inspectors attended a Key Stage 1 liturgy for the crowning of Mary and a whole school praise 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

Information about the school

- St Martin's Catholic Primary School serves the parish of St Michael's in the area of Sonning Common, Reading.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is slightly higher than the national average.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 76%.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils is well below the national average.
- The number of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is in line with national expectations.
- The school is part of a federation with St Anne's Catholic Primary School in Caversham. Since the last inspection a new executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and RE subject lead have been appointed.

Main Findings

- The leaders and governors of St Martin's school are committed to maintaining and promoting the Catholic mission of the school.
- The school is strongly supported by the parish priest, who actively assists the school in providing good collective worship.
- St Martin's is a truly inclusive school, where staff and pupils alike value and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual.
- Pupil participation in and leadership of the Catholic life and collective worship of the school is growing.
- The school has benefitted from the dedication and expertise of a higher level teaching assistant (HLTA), who has contributed and led in a number of areas of RE, Catholic life and collective worship. This expertise is now rightly being developed in all staff.
- The teaching and learning in RE is good because teachers enable pupils to be reflective and apply what they learn in lessons to their own lives.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- The Catholic life of the school and pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development are all good.
- The school has a secure understanding of its aims as a Catholic school. There is a sense of community, where all are working for the good of pupils to develop in an environment of Christian faith.
- The vast majority of parents appreciate the school's caring atmosphere where relationships are based on the Gospel values.
- Pupils proudly describe the purpose of their school – "*it helps us to be part of God's family, it brings us closer to God.*" This mission is understood and valued by Catholic and non-Catholic pupils alike.
- The school has successfully implemented the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile. Through its promotion pupils have a good understanding of a range of Christian virtues and values which they strive to live by. Pupils displaying these behaviours are regularly rewarded with certificates in whole school celebration assemblies.
- Raising funds for many charitable causes enables pupils to willingly support the needs of those beyond their own school community. Their donation of Easter eggs for the Readifood foodbank reflected their desire that all children in Reading would have a treat as they celebrated Easter.
- Pupils clearly understand how they should behave towards others and follow the school's *Golden Rules*. They appreciate that there are consequences to their actions. As a result, they behave well in lessons and on the playground.
- Inclusivity is a strength of the school and there is a strong emphasis on promoting the dignity of each individual. Staff and pupils make great efforts to embrace every member of the school community into all aspects of school life.
- Some good work has been undertaken by the staff of both federation schools to review its mission. The next step in the review process should be to include pupils, parents and governors in this discussion. It will then be possible to encapsulate its meaning into a mission statement that can be understood and lived out by all members of the school community.
- All pupils belong to one of four Houses; gaining House points motivates pupils' academic work and behaviour. At present, pupils' understanding of the House names is very limited. It would be beneficial to review these names and allocate ones which reflect the Catholic values of the school.
- Pupils have some understanding of the meaning of vocation, recognising that God calls each person to serve and help others. However, their knowledge of the word *vocation* and the variety of vocations, including a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, is limited.
- The provision made for collective worship within school and pupils' response to it are both good.
- All pupils are very reverent and participate well during all forms of collective worship. Whole school Mass and class Mass are celebrated regularly by the parish priest in school. Pupils contribute to Mass by acting as altar servers, reading the liturgy of the word and composing bidding prayers.
- During the inspection the very youngest pupils were able to engage joyfully during a crowning of Mary service led by the parish priest; appreciating moments of stillness,

joining in prayers, taking part in role play and presenting flowers at the foot of a statue of Mary.

- The newly appointed parish priest is a very supportive chaplain to the school. He visits the school weekly and talks to pupils informally in their classrooms, he regularly celebrates Mass for the school, and has introduced some new liturgies to the school such as the May procession. Feedback from pupils reflects the positive impact of this chaplaincy.
- The school participates well in the local parish by attending Family Masses at St Michael's and by providing a number of St Martin's pupils as altar servers. The HLTA provides a valuable link between the school and parish; she expertly supports the school and the parish sacramental preparation of pupils.
- The school has had some excellent modelling of collective worship planning and delivery by the HLTA. This expertise is now being shared with and replicated by other staff members.
- The school has enhanced class collective worship by providing new resources and by developing opportunities for pupils to plan and lead their class worship. At present, upper Key Stage 2 pupils are confident and capable when planning and leading worship. Pupils in Years 3 & 4 regularly write their own prayers for their class collective worship and lead daily class prayers. Whereas, pupils in Key Stage 1 set the focal point for collective worship in their classrooms. The greater opportunities experienced by older pupils to plan and lead collective worship could now be extended regularly throughout the school.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to compose and share their own personal prayers in their class prayer books, Gospel assemblies and in the school newsletter.
- Some prayers are said regularly by pupils, such as a prayer before lunch and at the end of the school day. The school now needs to ensure that prayers are also said at the start of the day and after lunch.
- Pupils of all ages know some traditional prayers of the Church. The school facilitates a rosary club during the months of October and May which is attended by many pupils. As a result, pupils are familiar with and devoted to this prayer. However, their knowledge of other traditional prayers needs to be audited and any omissions addressed, so that diocesan expectations can be met.
- The school has recently formed a liturgy group led by pupils.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

- The leadership of the Catholic life and collective worship of the school is good.
- The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher are both committed to promoting the Catholic life and collective worship of the school. They have shared this vision successfully with staff. As a result, the mission of the school to provide a Catholic education for all pupils is supported by all staff.
- Leaders and governors recognise the need to reflect its Catholic ethos in every aspect of school life. Consequently, the school celebrated Mass to mark the start of the federation between St Martin's and St Anne's.
- Governors are regularly informed about the Catholic life and collective worship of the school through the executive headteacher's reports and visits to school, where they have conducted learning walks, spoken to the school council, attended assemblies and parents evenings. Governors also attend an annual governors' day

in school. Consequently, they have a very clear understanding of the areas for development and the strengths of the Catholic life and collective worship of the school.

- The school has recently appointed a new Catholic life link governor, who is enthusiastic and committed to developing this role.
- The school plans to undertake the Catholic Education Service self-evaluation of governors. This exercise will provide a valuable audit of the strengths and areas for development for governors,
- Although the executive headteacher has monitored some aspects of the Catholic life and collective worship of the school, leaders recognise that this monitoring and evaluation now needs to be undertaken more regularly and by a wider range of stakeholders.
- The findings from the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life need to inform improvement planning more precisely.
- Senior leaders seek the views of pupils and parents regarding the Catholic life of the school. Pupils appreciate that their views are listened to.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- The leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education are all good.
- The recently appointed RE subject leader, under the guidance of the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and HLTA, has conducted a range of monitoring activities. The structured evaluation of this monitoring has enabled the subject lead to have a precise understanding of the strengths and areas for development in RE.
- Improvement planning in RE is clearly informed by the findings from monitoring activities. This has led to targeted support for teachers whose teaching is not consistently good. Joint planning and the modelling of lessons by the RE subject leader has led to an improvement in teaching. Consequently, the vast majority of teaching is now good.
- Nearly all class teachers have a good subject knowledge of RE which they use with expertise. As a result, pupils have a good knowledge of RE which they are able to express with appropriate religious literacy. For example one Year 5 pupil explained *"Paul had an epiphany, a sudden realisation on the road to Damascus."*
- The use of questioning by class teachers is a strength of the school. It enhances pupils' subject knowledge, deepens their thinking and challenges their ideas. Consequently, pupils are reflective and enquiring learners.
- Most pupils clearly enjoy RE and are engaged in lessons. Pupils in Reception class were engrossed in reproducing the events of Pentecost through their written work, their use of playdough and glitter, and their huge chalk and paint representations of the fire of the Holy Spirit. They were then able to explain the impact the Holy Spirit had on the disciples. However, a minority of pupils throughout the school feel that lessons can be repetitive.
- Tasks set in lessons are varied. They are most effective in developing learning where they continue the challenge set by teachers through their oral questioning of pupils. In some cases tasks set are not sufficiently matched to the prior knowledge and abilities of pupils.

- Teachers constantly make connections between the learning that takes place in RE and how it influences the way people think and behave. As a result, pupils are able to reflect on the meaning of what they learn in RE and relate it to their own lives. One pupil explained that “*RE is more important than other subjects because it helps you come closer to God.*”
- Pupils make good progress in RE across year groups and key stages. This progress is particularly rapid in Reception class and Year 2. Where progress is less rapid in Years 1 and 4, leaders have given targetted support to improve teachers' subject knowledge and teaching.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked and commented upon by teachers. Some of these comments require pupils to reflect deeply about their personal responses to their work. However, the quality of teacher comments and the regularity of pupils' responses are inconsistent and do not always adhere to the school's marking policy.
- Teaching assistants are a valuable resource for enhancing pupils' learning in most classes; often modelling RE specific language to all pupils and supporting pupils with SEND to good effect. However, there are times when they are passive, often at the start of lessons, and therefore lack impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils' awareness of other faiths is secure in some year groups but it is inconsistent across the school.
- Governors have oversight of RE and fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities well. The school follows the diocesan strategy for RE *Growing and Learning as People of God*.
- Relationships and Sexual Education is taught in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- Ensure work in RE provides the appropriate level of challenge for all pupils.
- Provide more opportunities for staff and pupils of every age to plan and lead collective worship.
- Develop the formal monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life and collective worship by senior leaders and governors.
- Present the school mission in a statement that can be understood and lived by the whole community.