

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- 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 inspector observed teaching across 4 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The inspector 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 governors, the headteacher and the parish priest.
- The inspector attended a whole school assembly, a multi-cultural assembly, an infant liturgy 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 inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self evaluation, data about pupils' achievement and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and RE evidence files.

Information about the school

- St Mary Immaculate is a smaller than average sized Catholic primary school and serves the parishes of St Mary Immaculate, Warwick, and St Charles Borromeo, Hampton on the Hill.
- The school is situated in the middle of a large, mixed socio-economic housing estate close to the centre of Warwick.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 41%.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is close to the national average.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly above average.
- The number of pupils with special educational needs support is in line with the national average.
- Pupils enter school with attainment typical for their age group.

Main Findings

- At St Mary Immaculate Catholic Primary School the overall provision of religious education, the Catholic life of the school community and the collective worship is good.
- The self evaluation undertaken by the governors and senior leaders is accurate in the majority of aspects of the school's provision and is supported by sound evidence. The governors are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have been single minded in their determination to oversee improvements.
- The staff team have demonstrated their commitment and determination in the way that they have developed the quality of religious education in order to improve the pupils' skills and understanding in all aspects of faith.

- In recent years the school has made progress in particular in the quality of learning, assessment, and the monitoring of RE which are outstanding.
- The pupils are confident and secure. They recognise the inclusive community in which they learn and acknowledge the impact of the Catholic faith on their lives.
- The Catholic life of the school is alive in the formal teaching, assemblies, wider opportunities and the relationships and clearly influences the actions of all members of the school community.
- The faith, enthusiasm and dedication of the headteacher, the staff and governors are giving rise to an enriched experience for the pupils and as a result, pupils are increasingly knowledgeable about their faith and are both skilled and confident in expressing spirituality in their daily lives.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

- The Catholic life of the school is evident on entering the building. The school environment emanates spirituality through its sacred artefacts, prayer areas, displays of religious values and most significantly through the happy and respectful atmosphere present in the conduct of the pupils.
- The input of the pupils in the developing Catholic life of the school has grown to some significance in the past two years. The 'Virtues Brigade' regularly takes a lead in the spiritual direction of the school through the design and delivery of prayer and through their views on the nature of the Catholic life of the school.
- The pupils are eager and attentive in their response to the experiences provided. They display very good levels of growing spiritual maturity. They are willing to discuss their faith and consider the impact it has on their lives. They understand the presence of God in their lives. For example pupils stated that their faith in God made them better people.
- Pupils contribute to the evaluation process through pupil interviews with staff and governors. The school council actively canvasses the views of pupils and brings areas for consideration to the leadership. This is evident in the arrangements for collective worship, where the Key Stage 2 pupils consider, design and present ideas to develop the spiritual life of the school.
- Pupils understand the importance of key celebrations throughout the liturgical year and are secure and ready to express their own views and beliefs. They are inspired by the life of Jesus and eager to share His values through their prayers, presentations, and assemblies, and during the celebration of Mass.
- Older pupils are exceptional at looking after their younger peers, coming to their aid when support is needed, and quickly informing staff if they think a child is in need. This year the school is focusing on the moral virtues in assembly. A "Virtues Brigade" of Year 6 pupils looks out for examples of these virtues being practised by pupils, which are then celebrated in assemblies.
- There is a growing awareness of the faith backgrounds of the local and global communities and pupils are eager to learn and relish the qualities and shared values of other world faiths.

- Initiatives to promote causes and support charities are now a strong part of the school's mission. The school has invited speakers in to present information about their work in aspects of world aid. Pupils have been motivated and responded enthusiastically by designing fund raising activities which have provided good support for the given charities.
- It is evident that pupils are listened to and their views accounted for in school development. Following an assembly on "Laudato Si", children have begun to more deeply reflect and act on stewardship of creation. For example, the school grounds have been toured by the school council to identify areas for design, development and repair. The outdoor environment has been enhanced successfully, providing a space where pupils can appreciate the gifts of God's creation.
- Since the last inspection the school community has carefully considered the depth of its Catholic life and has reviewed and rewritten its mission statement. This was a two year project, involving pupils, staff, parents and governors who met to reflect upon what the school offers its pupils and how faith is made manifest every day. The final statement of 'Achieve, Believe, Succeed: Together' drew on the views and contributions of all. The children are able to remember and quote this mission statement and hold these values in their minds and hearts as they work, interact and grow in school.
- Pupils are taught the importance of reconciliation, both in class time, assembly and through experience, as staff help children to deal with disagreements and conflict and to seek forgiveness and a new start. The impact of this can be seen throughout the school in the warmth of the relationships.
- The school staff ensure the depth and quality of the Catholic life in a number of ways. They have created a learning environment in which the life of Jesus, the liturgy and the key values of faith are displayed in a vivid and thoughtful manner. Spirituality is woven in to the teaching and as a result, pupils can discover the mission of the school across the curriculum.
- Within the school a community there is a continuous dialogue about 'togetherness' as the school staff prompt the pupils to find God in one another in all aspects of their work and play.

Collective Worship

- All pupils enthusiastically participate in a wide range of liturgies and prayer. The upper Key Stage 2 pupils are independent and eager in organising the weekly celebration of Mass. They take responsibility for the scripture readings and the setting of the altar. Lower Key Stage 2 pupils are guided in the composition of bidding prayers, which are written to reflect their petitions and aspirations for the world. The infant liturgy is alive with drama and singing which brings an intimacy to the pupils' relationship with Jesus through prayer.
- Classroom prayer is a key feature of each day for all pupils. The learning sessions are introduced with worship, using both well-established traditional prayers and in some classes, prayers composed by pupils. These routines for worship are strong and meaningful but not consistently practised across the school.

- The senior staff have put thought in to the planning for collective worship so that it meets the needs of all of the pupils. As a result the week is punctuated by a range of age-appropriate prayerful assemblies, a whole school Mass, a hymn practice and a reward assembly. Additional opportunities for worship come in the form of deanery Masses, where local Catholic schools combine to celebrate together and the weekend Masses in the parish. The sacramental preparation sessions led by the parish catechist and the parish priest also engage increasing numbers of pupils. The leadership of the school can see that by providing these occasions for worship the spiritual response of the pupils has grown incrementally and the numbers of pupils attending the weekend Masses has increased.
- Sacramental preparation for the Key Stage 2 pupils is shared by the parish and the school. During the inspection pupils spoke with sensitivity about the importance of the sacraments in their lives and their sacrament work provided evidence of good knowledge and understanding. However the opportunities to combine the work of the parish catechist and the classroom have not yet been fully realised.

Leadership of Catholic Life and Collective Worship

- The governors demonstrate unswerving commitment to the school and its mission. They are regular attendees at school events across the liturgical year. Every day a governor will be in the school in one capacity or another.
- The governors are strategic in their role to monitor, plan and implement school policy and provision alongside the senior staff. Monitoring takes the form of regular meetings with the headteacher to discuss school strategy, issues and events. Governors engage in pupil interviews where they will glean the views of the children on their perceptions of the Catholic life of the school and their response to the teaching. Governors also undertake work scrutiny and the analysis of attainment data to derive an understanding of the standards of the pupils' work.
- The governors are sturdy in their approach to school development and will give equal weighting to their challenge of the headteacher and his team and to the support for their work. As a result standards in all areas of the school have risen in the past three years, with RE and Catholic life being in the centre of that growth.
- The governors would benefit from undertaking a more regular strategic audit of the Catholic life of the school so as to gain a more in depth view.
- Governors have undertaken a skills audit, which has enabled them to ensure that the make up of the committees will best serve school development.
- The governors have an evolving sense of the need to develop the school's middle managers and look to develop these upcoming staff members through performance management, training and encouragement. In this way they contemplate that the vision for school improvement and growth in the promotion of faith can be realised.
- Governors regularly attend the school Mass and the range of collective worship assemblies and provide feedback to the headteacher and senior teachers about the impact of these celebrations.

- The RE working group, which includes the parish priest, considers collective worship carefully and prompts developments. For example, recent suggestions by school leaders have brought about a greater range of pupil petitions in prayer.
- There is a strengthening link between the school and the parish which has seen a greater level of commitment to the weekend Masses by pupils. This has come about as a result of the manner in which collective worship has been promoted by the headteacher, governors and the parish priest.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- Planned and regular lesson observations, work scrutinies and learning walks demonstrate that staff are committed to planning and delivering a high quality curriculum that is relevant to the children and that will develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need as they grow to be Catholics in the world today.
- The headteacher and governors undertake lesson observations and follow these up with proactive discussion. The results of monitoring are shared with individual staff members and additionally at staff and governor meetings with the strengths and weaknesses identified considered in the next round of planning.
- In order to develop all of the RE teaching, the senior staff support and mentor their colleagues to improve their subject knowledge and broaden the teaching techniques by which they inspire the pupils to reflect more on their own faith as they learn. Opportunities for professional development within the local cluster of schools and the Catholic partnership are also being organised and having an impact on teaching and learning.
- The senior leadership team undertakes analysis of the pupils' performance at all stages to track progress and identify targets for individuals, key cohorts of pupils and year groups. This data is comprehensively shared with the staff team and the governors. Pupil outcomes are carefully considered and appropriate progress targets for pupils and overall subject development, are set.
- When children enter the reception class their attainment in RE is low. As a result of a well planned RE curriculum, very good teaching, high expectations and sound systems of assessment and monitoring, the majority of pupils meet or exceed the diocesan expectations of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The progress made by pupils who have English as an additional language or special educational needs is good. The school has invested time and resource into ensuring that all pupils with barriers to learning have the support and opportunity to succeed in RE.
- Evidence in a wide range of pupils' books shows notable progression in the pupils' skills, knowledge and responses to faith. In their work the pupils are clearly inspired by the curriculum provided and are able to reflect on the spiritual and emotional elements of RE.
- Pupils' gospel accounts, tables of information and illustrations are of a consistently high standard, which has been well supported by the teachers as they have conscientiously applied the school's marking and feedback policy.

- The content of the RE curriculum is planned in accordance with the diocesan scheme and the pupil outcomes are in line with other core subjects. However RE is yet to be fully developed in its impact on other subjects.
- The teaching seen during the inspection confirms the school's self evaluation judgement that the teaching of RE is at least good with the majority being outstanding.
- The teachers have developing subject knowledge and are able to discuss with and challenge pupils to extend their thinking about a given topic in RE.
- RE lessons are carefully planned. Teachers think deeply about both the content of the religious knowledge and how they are going to provide opportunities for pupils to respond to the issues raised or experienced. Teachers build on the religious knowledge base of the pupils, so that as they move through the school their understanding of the Gospels, the life of Jesus and their own faith gains depth.
- Teachers are skilled in using a range of teaching devices to engage all pupils in a meaningful way. For example in Key Stage 1, the class teacher supported the pupils in understanding the transformation of St Paul through storytelling, drama and prompting judgements about the qualities of character. Differentiated tasks then challenged the pupils to consider how people today might change to live as Christians. In upper Key Stage 2 the class teacher utilised wrapped presents and mature discussion in groups to assist the pupils in considering how they might use the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- The weighting of RE in the curriculum ensures that it is regarded as a core subject and when evaluating outcomes, the high standards in English are used as a point of reference.
- The headteacher who is the RE leader, maintains very good records on the development and delivery of the subject. This acts as a curriculum tool for all stakeholders and bears witness to the richness of RE in the school.
- The diocesan strategy is effectively used and delivered through 'topics'. Pupils are motivated by the range of planned activities and as a result, good progress is evident in their work. For example in Key Stage 1 as part of the 'Sacrament' strand of the curriculum, the first hand experience of visiting the church and investigating the Eucharist, has given rise to a growth the pupils' knowledge, understanding and perception of their faith.
- The school is eager to utilise the knowledge and background of the pupils themselves and this is leading to an enrichment in the pupils' overall appreciation of global citizenship. In a multi-cultural assembly pupils from a number of countries presented information about their cultures and led prayers in their own languages. It was clear that all of the pupils appreciated the input of the international pupils. This underpinned the school's drive to engender a greater level of respect and tolerance through the curriculum.
- The effectiveness of the planned curriculum is facilitated by the low numbers of staff, who find that in their fortnightly curriculum meetings they can easily address issues of content and continuity, to better promote the pupils' learning.

- The design of the curriculum and in turn the learning is very much enhanced by educational visits. The pupils have benefited from trips to places of worship of other faiths as well as joint activities with local Catholic schools.

SPIRITUAL, MORAL AND VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development has improved significantly in the past three years. The rewriting of the mission statement and the focus on the cardinal virtues has given rise to a dialogue about faith amongst everyone in the school community. This conversation now informs the teaching, the day to day routines and the vision for the promotion of spirituality in the pupils.
- The annual 'Aspiration Day' where a range of people are invited in to school to talk about their work and careers, is helping the school develop the pupils' concept of vocation and service.
- However pupils' perceptions of vocations are limited and further regular work across all age groups on vocation and service would provide a better understanding of this concept.
- The emphasis on reconciliation, anti-bullying and honesty, particularly in assembly has demonstrated to the pupils that the Gospel message has implications for all members of the school community.
- Pupils regularly use the mission statement of the school as a point of reference for their lives in school. They are encouraged to see St Mary Immaculate school community as a 'doorway to the love and life of Christ'.
- The school provides security and opportunity for each pupil and makes manifest its aim to cherish each person equally and help them in achieving their potential through respect and opportunity.
- Pupils display good levels of confidence and are certain that they are comprehensively supported and in turn must promote the well being of everyone.

Recommendations

- The meaningful approach to the prayer life in some classrooms should be extended to all year groups.
- Further, regular and more in depth work for vocation and service should be planned into the curriculum for all pupils.
- The school's aspiration to learn more about world faiths should be strategically taught and delivered across a wider range of lessons.
- The school's monitoring of Catholic life would benefit from using a structured audit, so that strengths and areas for development could be better identified.