



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S THE MOUNT CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL WALSALL

Inspection dates 11th-12th February 2014
Reporting Inspector Brenda Beale

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 -11 years
Number on roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Joseph Hawley
School address	Jesson Road Walsall WS1 3AY
Telephone number	01922 720711
E-mail address	postbox@st-marymount.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	February 2009
DFE School number	335 3303
Unique Reference Number	104232
Headteacher	Mrs C Amos

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 lessons, one with the headteacher. 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 governors, staff, and parish priest. She observed 2 prayer services, a class meditation, a whole school assembly and Mass 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 teaching and learning, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Mary's the Mount is a parish school situated adjacent to Walsall town area. The school is one form entry with seven classes (YR- Y6) and a nursery. There are 211 pupils in school with 26 pupils in the part time Nursery. A breakfast and after school club is well established to serve the needs of parents and pupils. The intake of pupils and their socio-economic background is mixed. 65% of the children are from deprived backgrounds with 45% of these coming from the three most deprived areas of the town, though the numbers currently eligible for free school meals are well below the national average as are those with special educational needs. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is a little above the national average. 84% are from Catholic families.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation the St Mary's judges itself to be outstanding in all aspects of its Catholic life and RE. It judges the leadership of the Catholic life by the headteacher, senior team and governors to be outstanding. It also considers the way RE is led and the subsequent outcomes for pupils in RE to be outstanding. These judgements are entirely accurate and reliable because they are founded on thorough well established monitoring and evaluation processes. The headteacher, her deputy, who is also the RE leader and the governors have an expert knowledge and understanding of outstanding practice in all areas of Catholic life and RE. All members of this united community are involved in the monitoring and evaluation of this outstanding school. Priorities for the further development of Catholic life and RE are identified in carefully drawn up plans that are built on previous well implemented successes. The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained and continuous improvement.

School self-evaluation

Standards in RE are judged by the school to be at least good and with much outstanding practice impacting on standards. Pupils are attaining above average standards in knowledge and understanding of religion and an ability to reflect on meaning. The school knows this to be correct because it is based on well-established assessment procedures, lesson observations, thorough book scrutinies, and comparison of work in literacy books. Assessment data is meticulously analysed so an accurate picture of pupil attainment is made. The quality of pupils' learning and progress in RE, including those with particular learning needs and/or disabilities, is judged to be outstanding because through lesson

observations, pupil interviews, and book trawls, leaders and teachers know that almost all pupils make good and sustained progress and learn exceptionally well.

The headteacher, her senior leadership team and the governors place the pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development and their response to and participation in the Catholic life as their highest priority. It is under constant review: discussions and reflection take place at all levels as to how to maintain and develop the already outstanding practices in this area. Parents and pupils are involved in monitoring and evaluation of this aspect of school life and pupils are able to speak knowledgeably about the impact it has on their lives.

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship is judged by the school to be outstanding. Again this is a reliable judgement because the school plans and provides numerous opportunities for the children to be involved in the worship life of the school. It is scrupulous in assessing the impact it has on pupils' lives and the way in which they benefit from and participate in prayer and worship. Pupil Voice consistently indicates how important praying as a school and class community is to them: *'It gives the opportunity to show my thoughts and concerns', 'I enjoy that we can all pray for people across the world who aren't as fortunate as us'. One child wrote 'I enjoy praying because it is cool to love Jesus'*. Collective worship is central to the life of the community and a key part of every school celebration. The Eucharist is seen as the heart of Catholic school belief and celebration. The reason given by the school leadership that the quality of worship is outstanding is not that it merely happens but that it is regularly informally and formally monitored by staff and governors.

Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are reliably judged to be outstanding. The school's leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. Governors and senior leaders are a source of inspiration for the whole community. There is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the Catholic mission of the school is a priority, along with spiritual, moral and vocational development of pupils. This is reflected in the school improvement plan, the self-evaluation form and other documents. Self-evaluation at all levels within the school is a coherent reflection of rigorous monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge. The headteacher is a trained diocesan inspector and uses this experience to benchmark against other schools. Through whole school questionnaires governors are well informed about pupil, parent and staff views of the school. Governors hold the school to account for its Catholic life and recognise their responsibility for its evaluation. The evaluation leads on to well-targeted planning. Plans are implemented effectively and reviewed with reference to the extent to which pupils benefit from them. As a result pupils have a highly sophisticated understanding of the school's mission, share its purpose, and are keenly and actively involved in shaping and supporting it.

RE is judged through self-evaluation to be outstanding. The subject is meticulously managed by the RE leader who uses a range of processes to ensure that teaching, curriculum, planning and assessment are monitored and carefully evaluated. The RE leader, who is deputy headteacher, and the headteacher monitor lessons, scrutinise work and provide written and oral feedback to all class teachers. This feedback informs individual staff and whole school professional development. Parents, children and staff are involved in the monitoring of RE. The RE leader, with the headteacher and curriculum committee of the governing body, regularly evaluates the outcomes of the RE action plan. This plan is formulated, taking note of close self-evaluation and whilst it is formally written annually it undergoes review when priorities change. This happened recently when the link with the Catholic high school concerning science and RE became a priority.

How well teaching promotes purposeful learning, enjoyment, progress and attainment of pupils is reliably judged by the school to be outstanding. It makes this judgement based on skilled lesson observations and found that during the last two years a very high proportion of lessons were outstanding or good. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is also based on analysis of assessment, scrutiny of planning, book trawls, and pupil interviews.

Assessment procedures thoroughly inform self-evaluation. Lesson observations and book trawls indicate that peer and self-assessment are used on a regular basis enabling children to identify the next steps in their learning. Assessment procedures are embedded, allowing close tracking of pupil progress and provide a match to writing in literacy. This information is tracked by the RE leader who records the percentage of children achieving below, above and in-line with age related expectations. This assists the monitoring of the overall standard of RE work and the identification of strengths and development needs.

The curriculum is regularly reviewed and opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development identified and incorporated into planning which is scrutinised regularly by the RE leader. Inexperienced teachers are supported in their planning and the coherent and united culture of the entire staff ensures all members feel upheld in their work. Again developments in the RE curriculum are incorporated in the RE development plan. At this present time the plan identifies the need to update cross curricular plans in the light of the creative curriculum ensuring all RE units are fully met and also the need to focus on meaning and purpose.

Governors, headteacher and senior leadership take the view that the monitoring of Catholic life and RE is a whole school issue involving all staff, pupils, parents and all subjects; and that it is not just about worship and RE. It is about mission, communion, spiritual, moral and vocational development. It is also understood that there is a clear distinction between Catholic life and RE. The headteacher has a strong presence in the school and a clear vision of what an outstanding Catholic school comprises.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Achievement in RE overall is at least good and often better; with much outstanding practice impacting on standards. Pupils are attaining above average standards in knowledge and understanding of religion and an ability to reflect on meaning in both key stages. Scrutiny of RE books reflects a wide range of activities and tasks. Written work in the subject is monitored and judged as comparable with that in literacy. Extended writing opportunities demonstrate high standards of literacy and an ability to apply cross-curricular skills. Book trawl and mark book evidence indicates that there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls, although boys' writing is not so empathetic

Progress is judged to be outstanding because almost all pupils make good and sustained progress and learn exceptionally well. Progress is at least good in each key stage and is exemplary in some classes. Lesson observations confirm that pupils concentrate well and complete tasks to the best of their ability. They take pride in their recorded work; they clearly enjoy RE and consequently learn well. Pupils on the SEN register make good progress as evidenced through book trawls. During most RE lessons pupils are supported by a learning assistant. This has enabled these pupils to have a better focus through the use of intervention strategies. Initial informal monitoring suggests that this is having a beneficial impact on progress, self-esteem and confidence.

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.

Pupils lead and take responsibility for shaping activities with a religious character, in the school and the wider community. Their contribution to school self-evaluation in respect of the Catholic life of the school is significant. Pupils are proud of their backgrounds and beliefs and have a strong sense of personal worth. They show an ability to listen, to give thanks, to forgive and be forgiven. They express their own views and beliefs with reasoned confidence. All pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish community. They treat others with high levels of respect and know acutely that their behaviour always has consequences. Pupils understand that they are called to a life of service and they seek justice for all within and beyond the school community. They take full responsibility for themselves and their actions. Pupils welcome the challenge of questions of meaning and purpose and are able to offer their own answers to such questions.

Children's participation in and response to collective worship are outstanding. Vibrant acts of worship engage all pupils' interest and inspire in them deep thought and heartfelt response. Pupils regularly prepare and lead worship with confidence and enthusiasm from their earliest years in a variety of gatherings. They have very good knowledge of traditional prayer and liturgy and a thorough understanding of different styles of private and public prayer. They are at ease and act with integrity when praying with others who have different beliefs and attitudes to spirituality. Opportunities for children to pray both formally and informally incorporate many types of prayer. A prayer booklet is distributed to families and discussed with the children at the start of each year. This highlights formal prayers which children use throughout the year. Children know these prayers well.

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The headteacher is an exemplary leader of Catholic life and is fully supported in her work by her deputy, the staff and the governors. All aspects of Catholic life are carefully monitored and evaluated and lead to detailed plans which incorporate exciting new initiatives which are welcomed by all members of the community. The headteacher has the ability to unite, inspire and encourage her staff to give of their very best. All members of staff, including site manager, lunchtime supervisors and office staff are fully committed to the Catholic ethos of the school. Links with the parish, local Catholic high school and wider community are strong.

The RE subject leader is outstanding. She leads by example through her hard work and commitment to establishing the high quality learning provision for the children. She enjoys excellent relationships with staff and parents. She has established many initiatives since her appointment in 2006. She reflects upon her own practice and is very supportive of new colleagues. She has a sharp focus on school improvement and the mission of St Mary the Mount as a Catholic school.

Teaching, curriculum, resources, displays and assessment in RE are of the highest quality. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject. It is taught by Catholic teachers. Teaching assistants support and actively participate as appropriate, helping to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of where each individual child is at in their learning. They systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons, intervening as appropriate to make a marked difference to the pupils' learning. The curriculum effectively and systematically provides pupils with a deep insight into the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, and the relationship between faith and life. The curriculum incorporates the teaching of other faiths and cultures and promotes family life and sex education through the diocesan 'All that I Am' scheme. The school is very committed to developing pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development through both its Catholic life and RE.

The school successfully promotes children's think and reflection on their role in God's plan for them, on what does God want them to do with their life.

Recommendations

- Review cross curricular links to enable further time and opportunities to be dedicated to RE and the spiritual, moral and vocational development of the children.



February 2014

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

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Mary's the Mount Catholic Primary School,
11th- 12th February 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.

The school judged itself to be outstanding in its Catholic life and RE. The inspection found that this judgement is wholly reliable because:

- Your children flourish and benefit greatly from the school's vibrant Catholic life.
- Pupils achieve extremely well in RE and they make outstanding progress because teaching is always at least good and often outstanding. The curriculum and resources are excellent. Assessment is thorough and informs planning.
- Pupil's behaviour and care for each other are outstanding and reflect true Christian values and teaching.
- Children respond exceptionally well to the collective worship which they help to provide.
- RE and the Catholic life is very effectively led by the headteacher, her deputy, leadership team, and governors.
- All members of staff are united and fully committed to the promotion of your children's spiritual, moral and vocational development.
- Detailed development plans are in place to ensure the maintenance and improvement of the outstanding Catholic life and RE at St Mary's the Mount.

We have recommended that the school reviews the opportunities it can provide for RE in light of the introduction of the new national curriculum.

Your children's contributions to the excellent Catholic and prayer life of the school are outstanding. Throughout the inspection they were welcoming, courteous and informative. They are justifiably proud of their outstanding school. We thank you for the part you play in supporting the school and your children on their journey of faith.

Yours sincerely

Brenda Beale
Diocesan Inspector