

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report



Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Crookhams, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 1PG

Date of inspection: 17th March 2016

A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade 2

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy is good. The new curriculum programme has been well introduced and the teachers are confident in teaching it. The pupils are responsive learners and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. The RE coordinator is effective in supporting the programme and in ensuring the expected levels are reached. The website of the school has been developed well to give half termly content of religious education so that teachers and parents are secure in their support of the pupils. The leadership provided by the headteacher and the support and vision of the governing body result in focussed development of the pupils' religious literacy.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade 1

The effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing is outstanding. The encouragement of the teachers means that the pupils are drawn into understanding the importance and relevance of Christ's teaching in every area of school life. The daily prayer, the acts of worship and the scheduled masses and celebrations bring the pupils into an awareness of God's presence. The generosity of the pupils in wanting to help the causes they select in pursuit of the Common Good is notable. The vision and leadership of the head and senior leadership team together with the regular presence and encouragement of the parish priest all lead to an environment where the children flourish in the school's Catholic ethos. The sense of partnership of home, school and parish is an outstanding feature of the Holy Family school. The Governors take a keen interest in the Catholic life of the school. The school attends and cooperates very well with the diocesan opportunities for inservice and moderation.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited seven lessons and two assemblies, and carried out six interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of Holy Family, Welwyn Garden City was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Dcn Anthony Clark
Mrs Robina Maher
Mrs Monica McCarthy

Lead Inspector
Associate Inspector
Associate Inspector

Description of School

This Voluntary Aided school is a one form entry in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Welwyn Garden City. The school serves the parishes of The Holy Family, Welwyn Garden City, St. Bonaventure's, Welwyn Garden City and St. Thomas More, Knebworth. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 76%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 12%, from other Faiths 3% and from no declared faith 9%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 54%.

There are 207 pupils on roll, with no pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is below average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Twenty six pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number: 9193404
URN Number: 117481

Headteacher: Ms Ginnette Stevens
Chair of Governors: Mrs Jenny Owen

Date of previous inspection: 29 November 2010
Previous Inspection grades: 1

Key for inspection grades:	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

The previous inspection report made two suggestions for improvement. The first was to raise the achievement level in religious education by introducing more challenge and differentiation for higher ability pupils and the second was to give better feedback to pupils to help them improve their work. The school has made good progress on both fronts. The inspectors were particularly impressed with the system of keeping left hand pages of pupils writing books free for teacher comments and pupil response, as well as the use of colour coding in marking.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 2

The content of classroom religious education meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) well. There is a good correlation between what the Bishops expect to be taught and the religious education curriculum followed in the school. The RE syllabus is mapped and clearly linked to the RECD. The RE coordinator has grasped well the overview of the syllabus and there was evidence in the class mapping sheets. Other faiths were properly covered and the expected curriculum time devoted to them. Creative approaches on the part of a number of teachers to making concepts more easily absorbed were in evidence but there is still room for increasing challenge and scope for higher levels of achievement.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 2

The achievement of pupils in religious education as well as their attainment and progress is good. The school has introduced a new tracking system which is in place and effective. There was evidence in the pupils' workbooks, and in the school data that pupils are making progress. The marking system and feedback to pupils is good – the system of keeping the left hand pages for teacher comment and pupil update and response is particularly effective. Targets are in place but not yet fully embedded in that only some of the pupils could speak to what their target in religious education was. There needs to be greater use made of the Agreed Understandings in religious education, both to inform planning and to sharpen publicly shared success criteria. This will lead to greater security of judgement on assessing higher levels in Key Stage 2, especially at level 5.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

The quality of teaching is always good, with some excellent lessons. A variety of teaching modes were in evidence and pupils experience diverse challenges to make progress. In some classes ICT was employed as a constructive learning aid – in one class pupils took it in turns to interview each

other as apostles on camera and present TV clips of their personal experience of the last supper. Behaviour was notably good in all classes and the learning environment provided for steady progress. The pupils enjoyed talking about what they were learning in religious education and were articulate in describing what it meant to them. In some classes the teacher could have adjusted the balance between teacher presentation and pupil follow up to ensure more active involvement on the part of pupils. The provision of materials on the school's website results in constructive continuity between the classroom work and the pupils' home learning.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

A succession of staff changes meant the school has passed through a period of some difficulty in ensuring effective leadership and management of religious education. However the appointment of the current RE Coordinator to the position resulted in it being stabilised and taken forward well. The school has established its RE syllabus, the monitoring of teaching, the tracking of pupil progress and their levels of achievement. The headteacher has established a cooperative and learning style and teachers feel more confident to move from the familiar ways to the more challenging new ways. The solid direction of the governing body acting with both generous support and critical challenge has meant that both Catholic values across the curriculum and effective religious education teaching are in place. The support of the parish priest and his regular visiting and involvement in the school has resulted in well founded strength in the delivery and management of religious education.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Strengthen and embed the tasks and assessment for higher ability pupils to move to higher levels of achievement
- Look to providing further opportunities for pupils to be challenged in their understanding of their learning and faith development
- Review classroom practice so as to reduce the amount of teacher led talk and increase opportunities for pupil reflection and creativity

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

Notwithstanding that no points were made in the previous inspection report on how to improve the Catholic life of the school, the school has made improvements. There is a more active partnership with parents. This has been achieved through the development of the school's outstanding website, the good use of newsletters, and the involvement of parents in activities and prayer occasions linked to the Year of Mercy. There is a home/school prayer envelope that goes home to individual families on a rota basis and to which they can contribute. This has proved to be popular.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade 1

The recent improvements and policies have ensured that the place of religious education being at the core of the curriculum in the Holy Family School is fully embedded. The school is secure in ensuring 10% of classroom curriculum time is given to religious education, fulfilling the requirements of the Bishops Conference. The strength of the Senior Leadership Team and its focus on the Catholic life of the school results in religious education having its proper place and resourcing in the life of the school. The supply of bibles, the displays, the inservice arrangements are all evidence of the priority of RE. In due time teachers need to be encouraged to obtain the CCRS certificate. In every classroom there is a prayer corner and a cross though there could be further space given to an RE display board in every classroom, supplementing those in the corridors.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

Grade 1

The experience of Catholic worship, prayer and liturgy for the whole school community is outstanding. Acts of worship whether in the classroom or in the hall spaces with different school phases present are built into the timetable of the school. There is a good balance between pupil led worship and teacher led prayer, and the school is encouraged to continue its efforts at involving pupils more in the very planning of prayer occasions. The school celebrates well the key events of both its own story and the seasons and feasts of the Liturgy. It involves and makes welcome the parents who speak highly of the school's openness to their presence and involvement. The parish priest visits weekly and has come to know the classes. The sense of partnership of home, school and parish is an outstanding feature of the Holy Family School. Class Masses are celebrated in the school and are prayerful and reflective. Only on special occasions are coaches organised to take the whole school to the parish church which is more than a mile away.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice

Grade 2

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good, service and social justice on the part of the Holy Family School is good. The generosity, involvement and energy devoted to human

flourishing, both locally, nationally and abroad are outstanding. The pupils do know about the charities they are supporting and have a voice in helping choose new charities and ways to help. However the pupils are not yet conversant on why they are involved in terms of the teaching of Jesus Christ. There needs to be a greater awareness of particular biblical stories and phrases which underpin their service and commitment to social justice arising from their baptism. The school has started on this improved awareness with the highlighting of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy which the Year of Mercy indicates.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

Grade I

The Holy Family school is an outstanding example of the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish. The engagement with the parents, the welcome given to the parish priest, the creative ways that the school promotes interaction, are all indications of this fundamental openness to partnership. The very language used, home learning instead of home work, is an indicative example of the expectation of this partnership. The parish priest feels fully at home in the school and is able to give the support from the parish side to the partnership. There are good relationships with the diocese, with staff attending conferences and moderation meetings as a matter of course. Diocesan advisers have felt welcomed and involved in assisting the school in recent years as it has come through its various changes.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

Grade I

The leadership and management of Holy Family school has been outstandingly effective in promoting the Catholic life of the school, affirming in practice the school's mission statement "As a family we live, love, learn and celebrate with Jesus". The Governors have been fully engaged in their role in supporting and challenging the school in its recent development, taking care to protect and develop both the educational effectiveness and Catholic values of the school. The leadership of the headteacher and the empowering of the two assistant heads have been outstanding in creating the right climate for the staff to feel engaged and involved in promoting the Catholic life of the school. INSET is organised annually to give opportunities to staff to deepen their understanding of the meaning of the ethos of a Catholic school. New staff are carefully inducted to understand the nature of the school.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Further develop the pupils' understanding of the theology and biblical commission for Christian commitment to service and the common good
- Encourage staff to study for the CCRS