

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School

Boadicea St, London, N1 0UF

Date of inspection: 02 December 2015



A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 2

The school offers the pupils a rich and relevant curriculum that is grounded firmly in the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. It is enriched very well by materials from recent diocesan training. The delivery of religious education is structured well so that there is clear progression across the year groups and good achievement in religious literacy. Pupils progress as well in religious education as they do in the other core subjects. Resources are creative and inspiring with the potential to engage children really well in their study. As a result, pupils display progressively very good attitudes to learning as they go through the school. Teaching is typically good with many outstanding elements. Checks on pupils' learning and moderation of their work are built into the cycle of the school year. The pupils are gradually gaining confidence and expertise in following up teachers' helpful guidance. The staff team work well together, responding to the excellent guidance of the subject leader who ensures that religious education makes a central contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The link governor for religious education has a very active involvement in supporting classroom religious education. They are very well informed about current and future planned developments in religious education and contribute outstandingly well to the 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 overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of this school is outstanding. There is a real sense of community within the school with all staff contributing very effectively so that Catholic life permeates all areas of Blessed Sacrament. Staff new to the school are well inducted into its Catholic life. The outstanding ethos is nurtured and promoted by the governors and the headteacher with her senior team, including the subject leader. Worship and prayer are at the heart of school life. There is a very strong emphasis on developing the pupils' experiences of the sacraments, liturgical celebrations, Catholic traditions and participation in Mass, both at school and in the local parish. Pupils' engagement in the Common Good is rooted in a clear understanding at their own levels of the social teaching of the Church. Partnership with parents, parishes and the diocese are very effective and strong. The school, for example, is hosting study for staff in relation to a further Catholic qualification through the Diocese. Pupils are actively engaged in a number of charities both local and international. The link governor for religious education, together with local clergy, is actively involved in the preparation of pupils for their First Holy Communion, for example. Pupils flourish at the Blessed Sacrament School. The school has a very well informed approach to its evaluation of how effectively it lives its mission as a Catholic school.

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 10 parts of lessons, undertook a learning walk, six collective worship sessions, three Christian meditation groups, carried out four interviews with school staff, pupils and governors, and attended a discussion group on responding to world needs. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of pupils' work in lessons, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The inspection of Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School, Islington, 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

Mrs Sheila Nolan	Lead Inspector
Mrs Mary Coyle	Associate Inspector
Ms Nikki Kane	Associate Inspector

Description of School

Blessed Sacrament School is a one-form entry in the LA of Islington and the locality of Kings Cross. The school serves the local parish of the Blessed Sacrament, Islington. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 64%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 26% and from other Faiths, 1%. Pupils with no Faith background account for 9% of the school roll. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is close to 82%.

There are 218 pupils on roll, with 2 pupils with statements of special educational need or education, health & care plans (EHC). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an additional language is above average. There is an above average rate of families claiming free school meals. There are 117 pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium. The school is celebrating 50 years of its Catholic mission

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DFE Number:	206/3643
URN Number:	100451

Headteacher:	Mrs Norah Flatley
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Barbara Smith

Date of previous inspection:	July 2010
Previous Inspection grades:	Outstanding

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?

Since the last inspection, the school has intensified its focus on the pupils' experience of prayer. Vocal, meditative and contemplative prayer have all been enriched. On the feast of Corpus Christi, pupils and their families have annual opportunities for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Years 5 and 6 pupils join with other Islington Catholic schools to share their understanding of scripture and the applications in their daily lives. Families are encouraged to join the pupils in prayer, in using the peace garden and in liturgical celebrations, particularly in Lent and Advent. The school and parish work in partnership to involve parents, staff and pupils in a mission to support the spiritual development of the whole community. Pupils play a far more active part than previously in preparing for liturgy and prayer. A chaplaincy team has been established to support and develop the school's Catholic life.

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

Grade 1

The school's religious education programme for all year group highlights successfully the areas of the Curriculum Directory covered in each topic. The subject leader has ensured that all key components are covered. Each unit of work has detailed information to support teachers in their day-to-day planning to promote the pupils' religious literacy. The school chaplaincy team supports the religious education coordinator well and helps in identifying and providing relevant and creative resources. There are very supportive materials for teachers and pupils in their study of major religions other than the Catholic faith. This is particularly so for Judaism, Islam and Hinduism.

The school scheme of work for religious education is linked closely to the Church's liturgical cycle. The pupils regularly revisit the seasons and themes of the year, informed by their studies of scripture. Key vocabulary is highlighted very well for pupils to encourage them to talk and write about their knowledge of, and understanding, of the Faith. Pupils, at their own level, relate increasingly well their knowledge of the Faith to their experiences in their daily lives.

The school recognises that the development of teachers' subject knowledge within religious education requires on-going training as does their understanding of how to promote the pupils' fast progress in relation to 'learning from religion' (Attainment Target 2). To this end, the school is promoting the study of the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies for both teachers and support staff.

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

Grade 2

The school carefully considers the pupils' attainment and progress in religious education and compares their performance in relation to other key areas of the curriculum. The pupils' attainment is assessed and moderated carefully against the diocesan attainment targets. Helpful exemplar materials assist the accuracy of staff's assessment. Pupils achieve well in religious education and their progress overall is good. Their achievement is in line with that of other core subjects. Pupils make

faster progress in Attainment Target 1 than in Attainment Target 2. The most able pupils also do not always make as fast rates of progress as they might, particularly in making links to sources of revelation and in deepening their written responses to the 'big questions'. Nevertheless, the school's work to support the achievement of the pupils in religious education is improving rapidly.

The pupils' progress is tracked termly and rigorously, in line with other core subjects. The school has introduced religious education homework books to support pupils' independence in research and their religious literacy through extended project tasks. The outcomes of some previous project work, for example, the 'Laudato Si' project, is of a high standard and celebrated in wall displays.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

Teaching in religious education is typically good with many outstanding elements. The positive impact of the teaching on developing the pupils' religious literacy is seen in the improving standards, both in the pupils' workbooks and in their attitudes to learning. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic in lessons, enjoy talking to adults about their experiences and demonstrate a growing understanding of religious ideas and the meaning of signs and symbols. One pupil in Year 4, for example, chose to show inspectors the outcome of his personal research into the links between Abraham and Christ. They show a good awareness of how, at their own levels of understanding, their Faith is translated into everyday life.

Teachers' high expectations encourage the pupils to do their best at all times. Throughout the school, at the time of inspection, Advent and the Nativity were the themes in all classes. Creative and inspiring resources were a common strength of all of the sessions observed. For example, Year 6 had opportunities to use new technology to research the distance between Nazareth and Bethlehem in relation to the Gospel story. Others were able to explore information from the scriptures so as to identify figures in related accounts. Staff go to great lengths to ensure that materials will both engage pupils and develop their religious literacy. Similarly, an emphasis on the language of story and narrative is very strong. The school as a whole has an excellent awareness of the importance of developing the vocabulary and communication skills of the many pupils who speak English as an additional language. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and pupils work increasingly collaboratively with each other and with staff as they progress through the school. In a very good session with Year 2, pupils used simplified and pictorial accounts of both St Luke's and St Matthew's gospels to learn about the story of the Nativity. By the end of the session, pupils had made fast progress in reconstructing the narrative. Staff employ regularly a wide variety of activities to support the differing needs of pupils. However, senior leaders, including the religious education subject leader, has identified that further opportunities are required to support the fast progress of able pupils in their extended writing and engagement with their own learning. Pupils who are from other than the Catholic faith are integrated very well into lessons. Pupils' books show growing levels of religious literacy but for some, opportunities for extended writing are too limited. Pupils and staff take great pride in their religious education workbooks. Marking is regular so that pupils generally know how to improve their work. Teachers use questioning well in lessons to assess pupils' understanding. However, sometimes opportunities are missed to probe sufficiently pupils' grasp of content and ideas and so deepen their awareness of the links to sources of revelation and the applications to daily living.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

The subject leader, who is also a senior leader, communicates very well the school's well-defined vision for the development of classroom religious education in the school. There is a very clear direction of travel for the improvements to teaching and learning so that both will become

outstandingly good. The subject leader models very effectively how to provide high quality provision in all areas of classroom religious education. She has a deep appreciation of the centrality of religious education within the school and strives to lead staff and pupils in the pursuit of the school's mission statement, 'With Christ's love at the centre of our living and learning, together we aim for excellence.' The school is well centred as an active member of the church community, the local deanery and the Archdiocese.

Regular and rigorous monitoring and review of the work of classroom religious education is built into the cycle of the school year. There is a deep commitment to establishing and sustaining an excellent curriculum and increasingly effective teaching. Meticulous moderation takes place at school level and is supplemented by deanery and diocesan sessions. Follow-up procedures to moderation lead to excellent opportunities for staff training. Religious education targets are included in the school's performance management structures. The subject leader has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education. Self-assessment is thorough and generally accurate, if a little modest in some areas. Pupils' progress in religious literacy is tracked regularly and carefully and is improving rapidly, not least because of the excellent guidance provided to the staff.

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

- Look at additional ways of supporting able pupils to make outstanding progress in religious education throughout the school by;
 - providing more opportunities for writing at length and in depth
 - encouraging independent work and a deep engagement in their own learning
- Provide even more opportunities for pupils at all levels to carry out research to support faster progress in Attainment Target 2 by developing staff and pupils' skills in considering how the actions of people of faith can inspire.

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?

Since the last inspection, the school has intensified its efforts to recruit more Catholic teachers. To this end, it has formed close links with St Mary's Catholic University. Links with parents, the parish and the diocese have been sustained and nurtured very well. The school has gone from strength to strength in developing its Catholic life. Plans are in hand to extend the retreat programme beyond Year 6.

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

Grade I

Blessed Sacrament School places religious education at the heart of the curriculum. More than the recommended time is regularly devoted to the pupils' study of religious education. This high priority is reflected in the budget, the resources available, the care with which the environment promotes Catholic life, the many beautiful artefacts around the site, and the well-cared-for prayer tables in each classroom. At the time of the inspection, there was very effective consistency in the high

quality of the displays and advent wreaths throughout the school. The school benefits greatly from the excellent support from the local parish clergy. The governors' Catholic life committee works closely with the headteacher and senior staff to ensure that the school fulfils its mission as well as possible. The excellent leader of religious education is very well supported in her work to develop all of the staff, both Catholic and non-Catholic, in their understanding of what it is to be a Catholic school.

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

Grade I

The school places prayer and worship at the centre of school life. Staff and pupils have daily opportunities for prayer and worship, drawing on the richness of liturgy and tradition and including daily meditation. The school calendar follows closely the cycle of the liturgical year. Celebration of the Eucharist is regular both within the school and in the parish. Pupils have excellent opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Lent and Advent. Other rich opportunities include taking part in the Stations of the Cross, praying the rosary, and the use of the peace garden in honour of Our Lady. Pupils engage well in all aspects of the school's Catholic life. The chaplaincy team plan and support collective worship, very ably guided by the headteacher and the religious education leader. Music and drama are used very effectively in assemblies and in the liturgy. Year 6 have opportunities for a retreat and there are plans to extend this programme to other year groups. Non-Catholics share in and are comfortable with school's Catholic ethos. Members of the governing body regularly attend school and class masses, and other liturgical celebrations. There is a strong culture of evaluation and improvement within the school.

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

Grade I

The school makes an outstanding contribution to the Common Good. This is demonstrated clearly in the depth of understanding among the pupils of the Church's mission for social justice. They articulate very confidently their contributions to local institutions, the parish, their own school community and international charities, such as the Nepal appeal. Pupils were heard considering their charity choices through a debate on 'World Gifts'. At their own levels, pupils know why they work for the good of others. The school community, pupils, staff and families, benefits greatly from the work of a team of councillors. As a result, pupils thrive and their spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. Pupils are encouraged daily to share their gifts and talents and to use them in the service of others. Year 6 pupils support younger children in many aspects of school life, including reading practice. Respect for traditions other than their own means that the school community is a happy and safe place to be.

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

Blessed Sacrament School has a very strong partnership with parents. Their views are sought regularly. The overwhelming majority of the 80 plus parents who responded to the questionnaire was very satisfied with the work of the school. When parents requested more homework in religious education, the school responded very positively, including through the Prayer Bear Bag Project. Parents are invited to all Masses and to termly assemblies on a rota basis. Families and pupils

benefit from the Wednesday Word and homework that centres on the Gospel from the preceding Sunday. There is a very active relationship with the local parish, and local clergy are involved both as governors and as chaplains. They make regular visits to support the school in its Catholic mission. Relationships with the diocese and other Catholic schools are very good. Staff take part in all diocesan training and maintain strong links with the diocesan adviser. The school is a regular and active participant in area activities such as the inset day on 'developing spirituality' involving other Catholic schools.

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

Grade 1

The school's mission statement, 'With Christ's love at the centre of our living and learning, together we aim for excellence', highlights the Catholic purpose of the school. It informs all school policies and practice. School leaders at all levels, including governors, are fully committed to the Church's educational mission. Governors are regular visitors to the school and offer excellent levels of support and challenge in developing all aspects of its Catholic life. Staff are very well inducted into the high expectations of the school with regard to its Catholic life. There are excellent opportunities for staff to develop and nourish their understanding of the Faith. Self-evaluation is accurate and procedures support very well the on-going development of classroom religious education and Catholic life. Senior staff provide excellent role models for the staff and pupils in their respect for, and inclusion of, all in the school community as well as in their concern for the Church's global mission.

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

- Extend the provision for retreats beyond Year 6.