



Diocese of Westminster

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Junior School,

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DFE Number: 304 3500

URN Number: 101538

Headteacher: Mr. S. McGrath
Chair of Governors: Mr. E. Doherty

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 30th January, 2013

Date of previous inspection: June 2008

Reporting Inspector: Mrs. T. Cleugh
Associate Inspector: Mrs. C. McMahon

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 a day in school, visited eight lessons and an assembly, and carried out six interviews with school staff, pupils, parents 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, examination of school documents, and attendance at religious services where possible.

The Inspection of Our Lady of Grace, Brent, was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by 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.

Description of School

The school is a two form entry in the LA of Brent and the locality of Dollis Hill. The school serves the parish of St. Mary's and St. Andrews. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 99.6 %. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 0.4% and from other faiths 0%.

There are 239 pupils on roll, with 8 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is an average rate of families claiming free school meals.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Requires improvement;
Grade 4: Causing Concern.

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

Overall Grade: 2

The curriculum is planned with the Curriculum Directory links identified within the tasks set. The good teaching and learning evident during the inspection makes the content relevant to the needs of the pupils. Staff are well supported, through a range of shared planning and support, led by the leader of religious education. Evidence was provided during the inspection from discussions, observations and scrutiny of planning and the work in the books and on display. This demonstrated that there is a clear awareness and purposeful commitment to establishing good structures of monitoring and planning in religious education. The school learning environment is stimulating, colourful and welcoming. The range of stunning cross-curricular frescoes and murals, created by one of the non-teaching staff, is both attractive and appealing. They link to cross curricular subjects, in particular, history, with one in the hall which honours Our Blessed Lady. The staff are working hard to implement their vision of the place and importance of religious education, with consistent displays in classrooms depicting the current emphasis during this "Year of Faith", and the doorways reminding all who enter about the "Porte Fidei" and its links to the Sacraments. The staff are committed to a range of ongoing continuing professional development, including the CCRS qualification, which impacts on developing their knowledge and understanding in their teaching of religious education.

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in classroom religious education?

Since the last inspection the school has addressed the identified action points. They have developed their assessment and recording systems and procedures. This includes the recent introduction of their electronic tracking of attainment levels, since the autumn term. This is an on-going priority area to bring religious education in line with other core subject areas. The growing link for shared moderation, through the Brent Deanery, is now a priority to secure the accuracy of the levels of attainment, particularly in line with the revised agreed understandings of the strands within AT1 and AT2.

The school has also identified the need to incorporate the creative arts within planned units and areas of learning, evident within their self-evaluation.

The school's beautiful, prayerful Peace Garden, recently blessed by Bishop John Sherrington, provides an oasis of peace and tranquility within the school site in this urban area.

The following actions have been identified for further ongoing development:-

- Targets in religious education to be shared with parents as for other core subjects
- Ensure planning includes more child initiated tasks to enable more active participation by all pupils in all year groups
- Plan for higher attainment questioning and tasks, to challenge the higher ability pupils in all year groups, as for other core subject areas.

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

Grade 2

The school has embraced the revisions to the Curriculum Directory, which they have linked to the Sources of Revelation. They are also following the units outlined within the Diocesan "Doors of Faith," (Porte Fidei). The school plans its work through the Units, provided by the current Diocesan resource materials, which they incorporate within the Liturgical Cycle. These units are providing pupils with opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding towards religious literacy, in particular, Scripture and Tradition.

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

Grade 2

The school has begun developing its electronic tracking system for religious education in line with other core areas. The subject leader of religious education has begun liaison within the deanery network, where moderation is shared, to establish secure levels of attainment. Whilst there is evidence that by the end of key stage two, pupils achieve Level 4, the school recognises the need for further development of their planning to prepare pupils throughout the key stage towards a secure Level 5. During the inspection, the scrutiny of the work in pupils' books, across the phases, demonstrated the growing good practice in assessment of the units. These are linked through the Diocesan agreed understanding in attainment targets and levels. The school has identified as its priority to plan for the achievement of higher ability levels in religious education across the phases, in line with their strong achievements in other core subjects.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

During the inspection lessons were observed in all classes. The quality ranged from good to outstanding. Where the teaching was outstanding, the pace and challenge was evident, in particular for higher achieving pupils. There was planned support and scaffolded learning opportunities for those pupils with additional needs. This included the role of the other adults in the learning process, enabling them to be active participants. The lessons included making time for pupils to reflect, analysing how they can respond to God's call with comparative texts from Scripture. The school recognises its priority to plan higher order questioning and challenging tasks for higher achieving pupils. ICT is well used across the school to enhance learning opportunities, in particular how pupils can develop their understanding of the centrality of God in their lives. The subject leader in religious education is modelling good practice across the school, a role which is identified for ongoing development.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The subject leader in religious education, in partnership with the Headteacher, supports the school's commitment to effective provision of religious education. Their vision is embedded into their identified actions for ongoing development. This is well supported by the Parish Priest, who pro-actively supports many aspects of the religious education provision. The recently developed links, through the Brent Deanery network, is supporting effective moderation, planning key links across the range of units, to deliver effective religious education and, in particular, assessment of progress in religious education.

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 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 outstanding overall effectiveness of this Catholic school is demonstrated by the good working partnerships developed by the Headteacher, who is ably assisted by the Deputy Headteacher. They are well supported by the pro-active Governing Body. Their ongoing commitment to excellence, in particular their strong triple partnership fostered and developed since the previous inspection, is a hallmark of good practice. This significant leadership is the driving force which underpins the high quality relationship and respect of the parents. Prayer and worship are central to all aspects of the daily life and worship of the school, which empowers pupils and staff to witness and experience the richness of our faith and its traditions. These are celebrated within the community of the school, home and parish, living out their mission and ethos throughout the Liturgical Cycle.

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school ?

Since the last inspection all action points have been addressed. This is particularly significant in the way the school has fostered and nurtured excellent partnerships between the school and the Parish. The meeting between the Inspector and the Parish Priest endorsed the way this also embodies the triple partnership of Home, School and Parish. The meeting with the group of parents provided further examples of how much they appreciate the way their children are growing in their faith and are prepared for participation in school and parish liturgies. There is further evidence through the growing number of altar servers from Year Three, who actively and eagerly commit to the schedule of Masses and Liturgical celebrations. Pupils' prayer life at home is also supported through the distribution of the Wednesday Word resource materials enabling families to reflect upon the Gospel.

The school can now:-

- Continue their excellent links and triple partnership between home, school and parish
- Offer support and guidance to other Diocesan schools through examples of their high quality provision for developing the Catholic Life and identity of the school
- Ensure pupils continue to have a variety of opportunities to initiate and plan liturgies

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget. **Grade 1***

The school has fully met the requirements of the Curriculum Directory ensuring the full 10% time allocation is in place. The governing body has committed to generous resourcing for all aspects of religious education and the prayer and liturgical life of the school. The recently blessed Prayer Garden provides testimony to the how the Governing Body and leadership of the school listen to the views of the pupils. The request from the pupils, represented by the School Council, to have access to a space for prayer, stillness and reflection within their site, is now a pivotal part of the daily prayer life of the school. The continuing professional development programme includes the full range of Diocesan training opportunities for staff and governors. This commitment is annually planned within the budget setting process.

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

Grade 1*

The Catholic life and worship of the school is outstanding. This has been borne out from a combination of witness by parents, the Parish Priest and the pupils. They consistently outlined the rich and varied range of opportunities for reflection and prayer, throughout the Liturgical cycle. The programme includes annual devotion to Our Blessed Lady, including the annual May Procession, the Rosary Group's May and October devotions. The recently blessed Peace Garden is regularly used, as one pupil described, "you can go there when you feel like praying". The pupils are also proud of how the School Council influenced the development of the Peace Garden. The eager availability of the increasing numbers of altar servers to support parish celebrations, was endorsed by the pupils who were very proud of their opportunities to participate so regularly. The development of the "Prayer Bags", designed by a member of non-teaching staff per class, provide a range of resources and small artefacts, which empowers pupils to pray and reflect with their families. These resources and artefacts are changed according to the current events within the liturgical cycle. The school plans high quality Advent and Lenten reflections, Pageants and Nativity celebrations, which also support planned Parish reflections. Pupils are encouraged to reflect, and a range of prayers were available from pupils. The "Book of Eternal Life", completed during the month of the Holy Souls, provides further evidence of how the pupils are encouraged to pray. The house point system is dedicated to five saints, including their parish of St. Andrew. The outstanding assembly, presented during the inspection, reminded the pupils about how the Sources of Revelation influence our growing knowledge and understanding of the centrality of God in our lives. The powerful and poignant liturgical dance performed by older pupils, reflecting on the "Footprints" message, reminded the community of the importance to trust in God and His plan for us all in our lives. The school has embraced the Church's call, during this Year of Faith, to include the themes from "Porta Fidei" within the units on developing as a "Sacramental People".

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

Grade 1*

The school is fully committed to ongoing generous support to a variety of charities. They commit to an annual programme of generating funding within the termly cycle. The pupils interviewed during the inspection are very proud of their participation in learning about and responding to their call to serve others less well off than themselves. Their dedicated building, "Horizon House," which was blessed by Bishop John Arnold, is now a multi-purpose resource and venue, including supporting the triple partnership access by home school and parish. Its facilities and space also enables the school to host the Brent Deanery

meetings. The generous fundraising impacts greatly upon the pupil's awareness and understanding of their responsibility to social justice within their community, locally and indeed globally. Their outreach and shared good practice includes their ecumenical links and partnerships with the other Christian communities in their area. The school is justifiably proud of its inclusivity, in particular the developments of the "Equalities Group", who liaise with parents and a range of multi-agency professionals, discussing and developing issues such as accessibility and extra curricular drama programmes for pupils with particular needs. The meeting with the Parish Priest during the Inspection, provided examples of the way the school is "part of the same building" as the parish; such is the excellent relationship between them that the "real richness of Catholicity" is lived between the school and the parish. The generosity to Catholic agencies, such as, CAFOD, HCPT, their support and links with a school in Uganda, raising vital funds for the completion of the building project and provision of necessary resources, is worthy of note. The annual commitment to Cricklewood Homeless Concern and their Disability Awareness Week supports the opportunity for pupils to have realistic awareness and deeper understanding of the plight of those less well off than themselves. Their visit to the Houses of Parliament was the culmination of their year long focus upon Justice and Peace developments and opportunities, including their opportunity to challenge their local MP regarding ongoing local issues.

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 1*

The continuing professional development programmes include a range of Diocesan led training for staff and Governors. The meeting with a long serving governor during the inspection provided a range of evidence of how the Governing Body is fully and pro-actively committed to the school. The integral way the school functions in partnership with the Parish, the Governing Body and the Diocese enriches this strong sense of belonging and diversity which is celebrated in many ways. The growth of the pan Deanery initiatives and the central role the school plays in these, reflects its full commitment to partnerships and collaboration as a Diocesan school. The active participation, purposeful dedication to delivering agreed Diocesan policies and initiatives, is clearly evident. The presence of two Diocesan Bishops, as lead celebrants in the blessing and dedication of their new building and their Peace Garden, over the past two years, affirms the school's pride in their belonging within the Diocesan family. The parents who met with the inspectors were overwhelmingly appreciative of the contribution by the school for the continuing faith formation of the children. They unanimously agreed that the school is both welcoming and supportive, whilst being very efficient and empathetic to their concerns or queries. The parental questionnaire, presented as part of the inspection evidence, indicates the very strong agreement in how the school supports both the progress of their children and the quality of its provision as a Catholic school.

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

Grade 1*

The subject leader in religious education is very ably supported and guided by the headteacher. During the inspection it is clear how the headteacher is highly regarded and respected as the key person who "brings all the people in our triple partnership together." His collective worship, witnessed during the inspection was outstanding. It reflected and linked the sources of Revelation, with their impact upon the pupils and their role as a "Sacramental People", where "God is always present." The headteacher works in close partnership with the subject leader in religious education, who is also the deputy headteacher. Together they have led and managed the Diocesan revised policies and initiatives, including the current

development during this "Year of Faith." They ensure their dedication to development of the Catholic Life of the school is central to all aspects of the school's improvement. There was evidence of this through a wide range of explicit examples, both in preparation for and during the inspection. Their completion of the self-evaluation document includes evidence of their robust monitoring systems and their full commitment to excellence. This includes how they empower their pupils to understand their sense of belonging and their role as disciples, seeking fullness to life. The highly significant contribution and role of the Governing Body has contributed to the outstanding development of the catholic life of the school. They have a wealth of experience and expertise, which reflects the well organised and thorough strategic development of the school. The long serving governor, responsible for the catholic life of the school, stated how it is "faith first, all governance comes from that", which is their driving force and central mission.