



Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Pratt Street, Camden, NW1 ODP

Date of inspection: 13 November 2014

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 1

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education (RE) in developing pupils' religious literacy is judged to be very good. This school has clearly seen substantial improvements in almost every aspect of its work over the last few years. This is because of the relentless drive and ambition and determination of the Executive Headteacher to improve standards. She has assembled a very strong and focussed leadership team within the school, and the Associate Head has also clearly played a key role in this school's development. The school also greatly benefits from the support and challenge of an experienced Chair of Governors. Our Lady's is not yet outstanding because achievement of pupils is variable across the school and is judged to be good at this moment in time. Progress from a low base is however judged to be very good as pupils leave the school either at or above national levels of attainment. Work needs to be differentiated further in many classes and more of pupils' own work and input into books needs to be provided. Work on Judaism in particular is of a very high standard. The curriculum is well planned for and the displays, in each class, of the contents of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* is very effective. The school does need to broaden its curriculum further to match the abilities of all pupils. Quality of teaching is very good with some outstanding teaching also seen. Pupils get a very good and nurturing start in the Reception Year of the school. Teaching is at least good in all classes seen and the teaching in Years 5 and 6 is of a very high standard. Behaviour and engagement of pupils is of a high standard in every class observed. Monitoring of standards by management is outstanding and has had a major impact in this school.

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 school's overall effectiveness in this area is outstanding. The introduction of Christian meditation is especially noteworthy and exemplary in this school. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are plentiful and the children love to lead prayer and worship. Partnerships are fruitful and positive at all levels and parents are very supportive of the leadership of the school. There is a clear vision and purpose shared by the whole school community in promoting the Catholic life of the school. Pupils' understanding of the Common Good needs further work and development but the other key issues highlighted in this report are minor and are easily rectified and addressed. The school has clearly come a very long way since its previous report some four years ago and has made significant improvements in every single area. Leadership has again been key in driving the school forward. Its work in promoting the Gospel values in this inner city school is outstanding and the parents, governors and staff can be justifiably proud of their achievements in developing the Catholic life of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Camden.

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 school has improved beyond all recognition since its previous report in 2010. All the key issues highlighted in the previous inspection have been fully addressed. In particular the quality of teaching, the standards of work produced by the pupils and the effectiveness of leadership and management have all shown great and marked improvement. It is quite clearly a very different and greatly improved school in almost every aspect since the previous inspection.

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

Grade 1

The content of Our Lady's Catholic School Religious Education curriculum fully meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. The curriculum is well planned for by the religious education leadership team. The school uses as its core the *Come and See* scheme of work in every class. It is looking at other resources to further enhance the learning of the higher ability pupils. Pupils are being taught about other faiths especially Judaism in an extensive and highly developed manner.

The school has invested in a broad and diverse range of resources linked to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Every classroom has a good quality display area showing how the four areas of learning in the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* are being covered. This is a useful and imaginative way to engage all staff and visitors in the delivery of the curriculum. The planning and content of this school's RE curriculum and in individual lessons is very thorough and assists the good teaching seen.

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

Grade 2

Pupil achievement overall is good. Achievement is at least good in the Reception class and among the pupils in Years 5 and 6 where it is very good. Achievement overall is variable ranging from good to, in some cases, outstanding. Progress is especially good in Years 5 and 6 and pupils with special educational needs are also being very well catered for. Given the school's own context of high numbers of non-Catholic pupils and high levels of deprivation standards overall are at least good and very good among the older pupils. Attainment on entry is at least low in comparison to national averages and pupils leave mostly either at or above national standards of attainment, therefore progress is judged to be very good.

Attainment is variable across the school with many classes using the same worksheets and photos to illustrate coverage of work. This replication is wasting valuable time and does not enhance pupils' learning and needs to be addressed. The school teaches about Judaism in a very thorough and thoughtful way. A visit from a trainee female rabbi and a Catholic priest generated some superb and thoughtful writing among the older pupils about shared similarities and differences in training and characteristics required for entry into such vocations. Teachers use the national levels of attainment in a mostly accurate manner and the school has engaged in moderation of work in a wide variety of ways. This is all helping to raise standards.

The school is aware of its need to develop further resources to cater for some of the higher ability pupils.

The quality of teaching

Grade 1

The quality of teaching across the school is judged to be very good.

The children get a very good start in the Reception Year where teaching is calm, nurturing and purposeful. All teaching seen across the school was judged to be typically at least good with some outstanding teaching seen in Upper Key Stage 2. Planning of lessons and curriculum delivery is very thorough and many teachers appear confident in teaching the subject. Teachers new to the profession and non-Catholic teachers are being very well supported by the RE leadership team who model lessons for them and often team teach as well. This is very effective in delivering good quality lessons. The response and engagement of the pupils is a major strength of this school and behaviour in lessons was almost always of a high standard. Discussion among the pupils during lessons was lively and elicited some very good responses to thoughtful questions. Pupils told the inspection team that they really enjoyed learning in RE lessons as it gave them a good chance to think and express their own thoughts and ideas. Support staff were also seen to play a crucial role in lessons and children with special educational needs in are being very well catered for. The highly evolved systems of lesson monitoring instigated by the Executive Head has clearly had a major impact on raising the standards of teaching in the school. Teachers are expected to deliver high quality teaching and nothing less is considered acceptable. Marking is being well developed in the school and older pupils are clearly taking notice of how to improve their work.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1*

The leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. The school faces some significant challenges in teaching religious education in inner London in 2014. Because of the strength, determination and vision of the management team these challenges are being very effectively met. Leadership is devolved and a strong team has been formed to ensure that every aspect of Catholic education is covered. A very experienced and knowledgeable chair of governors plays a significant role in the continuing drive to raise standards within the school. The school benefits greatly from an Executive Headteacher who has clearly worked wonders in transforming this school in the last few years. She has built up a highly effective team of an Associate Headteacher two Assistant Headteachers and a highly skilled R.E subject leader. They all complement each others skills and each is responsible for a different aspect of either Religious Education or Catholic Life. Opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) for staff are plentiful and often shared within the Federation. The schools own self-evaluation is a thorough and mostly accurate review of the school's strengths and areas for development. The drive to improve standards is relentless, well established and carefully monitored and therefore the leadership and management is judged to be outstanding at all levels.

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

- Review how work is presented and collated in books and around the school to ensure greater differentiation of pupil outcomes in all classes
- Look for extra resources to supplement the teaching of the core curriculum to further enhance and enrich the achievement of pupils of all abilities in the school

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?

Everything appears to have improved since the last inspection in the area of the Catholic life of the school. The school itself highlights the pupils' own planning, preparing and leading acts of worship as being a key feature that has improved. This inspection affirms this. The introduction of Christian meditation every day is also especially noteworthy and a distinctive feature of this school.

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

10% of curriculum time is devoted to the teaching of religious education across all key stages every week. This is planned for and monitored by the whole RE leadership team and also the governing body. The school views religious education as a core subject in the curriculum and as such, time, money and resources are given in accordance with its key status. An appropriate annual budget is allocated every year. Teachers have mostly good subject knowledge of religious education in accordance with the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* for England and Wales. New teachers and non-Catholic teachers are being well supported in learning about the teaching of religious education. There are displays and prayer corners throughout the school and mostly of a good quality. Many of the RE displays are created by adults and opportunities are being missed to showcase children's own work more. The school is very committed to ensuring that RE is at the core of its curriculum and is very successful in implementing this.

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

Grade 1*

Prayer and worship is a major strength of the school and is judged to be outstanding. Worship, prayer and meditation are embedded in the daily life of the school. During this inspection pupils in Year 1 were observed preparing for acts of worship and in Year 6 a highly effective Christian meditation took place. Despite external distractions, few pupils were not wholly engaged in this and it was clear that meditation is integral to the life of the school and has been now for some years. Even the youngest pupils participate in meditation and this is a very significant feature of this school. All classes from Year 2 upwards have two prayer leaders. Worship is integrated within the context of the liturgical year and there is a carefully planned programme for assemblies and worship based around the liturgical year. Pupils of all ages played a central role in the preparation and presentation of class prayer, assemblies and liturgy seen during this inspection and this is also a regular feature of school life. The school has introduced a pupil prayer book that is started in Reception and follows pupils up to Year 6 which contains a range of traditional Catholic prayers and prayers written by children individually and collectively throughout their school year. The prayer book is added to each term and is presented to pupils as they leave Our Lady's. This is a very clever and effective way of engaging pupils in prayer life.

Mass is celebrated throughout the school's year and there is a good relationship between the school and the parish with masses and prayer services being planned jointly. Parents are invited to all masses and children play a central role in the celebration of Mass and take responsibility for the liturgical ministries. Opportunities for reconciliation are provided across the school year and especially during Lent. Pupils enjoy preparing for and taking part in acts of worship as a school community. The spiritual development of all pupils is also extensively provided for. Parents of children from other faiths are welcomed in to talk about special events and celebrations such as Shavuot, Chanukah and Eid. Children from other faiths feel included in all school activities and are always eager to share and discuss aspects of their own faith.

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

Grade 1

Pupils support a wide and eclectic range of local and international charities. Examples include the St Vincent de Paul Society and PLAN a charity that supports pupils overseas such as in Indonesia. The school during Harvest Festival time supported a food-bank in the local parish church. Other charities such as Marie Curie and CAFOD have been supported over the years by the school. The school council organises a movie night with the parents PTFA to raise money for good causes. The pupils love discussing and sharing all the fund raising activities they do to raise money but are much less secure in understanding where the funds go, what impact it has or the theology underpinning why they are helping others. The school needs to do much more work in this area to develop pupils' awareness more and this is a key issue for the school.

The school has done extensive work on promoting peace and has been inspired by visitors from the Quaker Movement, Amnesty International and Pax Christi. During a recent Peace Week the normal curriculum was modified to allow the pupils to concentrate on peace and reconciliation within the school and in the wider world.

The school's own stated aims and ambitions are to encourage pupils to have a moral conscience and to be aware of the moral teachings of the Church through religious education and worship. It is very successful in achieving this aim.

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*

This is a strength of the school in so many ways and the school is very committed to developing its role within the Diocese of Westminster. Links with other local Catholic schools are strong at all levels and the Federation with Eugene de Mazenod school has clearly been very successful. The schools share staff and governors and expertise is widely spread across the Federation to good effect. Parents, via a questionnaire and previous school surveys, express support for the school and its work and recognise the massive changes that have occurred over the last few years. They are almost universally happy and content that their children attend this Catholic school. A small number would like to see more homework being provided and the school has recognised this.

The school regularly attends events at a diocesan level and engages in all moderation of assessing work in both Camden and also in Westminster.

The school actively strives to foster good links with the parish and encourage home and school links. Some classes have attended the 12 o'clock lunchtime Mass at the local church. The parish priest is always a welcome visitor to the school. Partnership at all levels is outstanding.

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

Grade 1*

The leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The Executive Head, Associate Head, assistant heads and governors share a strong vision to develop a Catholic philosophy of education that underpins all aspects of the school. In this goal they are highly successful. The school states that in its Mission Statement the school is clear that they uphold and promote Catholic values and beliefs. This is evidently true.

The Mission Statement is not on the school website, is not prominently displayed around the school and is not known at all by the pupils and this needs to be addressed

There is a clear vision and high expectations for driving up standards in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. The challenge for the school is to maintain these outstanding judgements with all the changes in education and local community in the years ahead.

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

- Ensure that the Mission Statement is displayed prominently within the school and on its website and is more widely known by pupils, staff and parents
- Review its display policy around the school so that it is more child centred and pupils' high quality own written and artwork can be shared and seen by all visitors
- Develop the work around the Common Good to greater increase and deepen pupils knowledge, awareness and understanding of theology in this key area