

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report



Pope Paul Catholic Primary School

Baker Street Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, EN6 2ES

21st May 2015

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. This is because the leadership of the headteacher has ensured that religious education is at the heart of the curriculum and is well funded through resources, time and staffing. The regular cycle of moderation, class observations, scrutiny of work and progress through the levels of attainment indicate a high level of effectiveness across all phases. Senior leaders are excellent role models for all staff and the support of new teachers has led to good pupil progress. Leaders at all levels have ensured that the structure and presentation of the curriculum captures the pupils' interest. Teachers' subject knowledge is good which has led to confident delivery. By Year 6 pupils' religious literacy is of a good standard and they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The experienced governing body provides a good balance of challenge and support and is active in the life of the 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 leadership of the headteacher and governors has ensured that commitment to its Catholic identity is evident in all aspects of the work of the school. Catholic faith is at the centre of the whole school curriculum overview and strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' experiences of sacramental celebrations. The richness and depth of the Catholic faith and way of life is presented through the teachings and traditions of the Church in a way which engages and inspires pupils. Prayer and worship are central to all that the school does and a well established Liturgy group gives pupils a greater role on planning and leading in this area. The traditional prayers of the Church are well known by pupils and used in class collective worship and assemblies. The school's commitment to Fairtrade allows excellent opportunities for pupils to engage with Catholic social teaching and the Common Good which is well understood by pupils. Relationships and behaviour are excellent within the school and pupils take advantage of the many opportunities available to serve the school and wider community. Parents are positive about the school and express appreciation of the way their children's faith life is nurtured. Governors are fully involved in promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school. They provide the senior leadership with support and a robust level of challenge.

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 six lessons, four acts of collective worship and carried out seven 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 Pope Paul Catholic Primary School, Potters Bar 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 a Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Mrs Pamela Brannigan	Lead Inspector
Mrs Jackie Cox	Associate Inspector
Mrs Niamh Brady	Associate Inspector

Description of School

This Voluntary Aided school is one form entry in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Hertsmere. The school serves the parishes of Our Lady and St Vincent, Potters Bar with some pupils coming from other local areas. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 83%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 9% and 2.4% come from other faiths. 5.6% of pupils have no faith background. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 74%.

There are 206 pupils on roll, with no pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ 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 in line with the national average. There is a well below number of families claiming free school meals. Eight pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number:	919 3975
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Headteacher:	Mrs Helen Lines
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Karen Davies

Date of previous inspection:	2 nd February 2010
Previous Inspection grades:	Grade 2

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>

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 met all the areas highlighted from the inspection in 2010. In recent years the headteacher has put in place a wide range of moderation activities to ensure assessment in religious education is accurate. Robust monitoring systems have been established for planning, marking and teaching, for which teachers receive regular feedback. This has led to the effective delivery of religious education. A developmental marking policy is used across the school and its effectiveness is regularly monitored. The introduction of the Composite Model has increased the level of pupils' religious literacy and understanding of theology. Investment in high quality resources and more effective use of teaching assistants has led to good lessons where all groups of pupils make progress.

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

Grade 1

By following the Composite Model the school is providing a systematic study of the areas in the Curriculum Directory. In planning, the school maps out how the four areas for study and various topics covered match the Curriculum Directory. Religious education is presented in a variety of ways and pupils are well aware of how their new learning is based on what has gone before and they are able to make links. Resources are very well used to make sure all opportunities for learning are met. Pupils across the school have good opportunities to study other world faiths and develop respect and understanding for other beliefs. They also have an excellent understanding of the Common Good and social justice. Through high expectations there is a clear and shared vision of the importance of promoting religious literacy among pupils. New staff are provided with a high level of support to ensure they can provide a good level of challenge for all pupils.

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

Grade 2

Pupils' achievement is good. There is evidence of progress measured by internal and external monitoring and moderation which shows that pupils attain similar levels as in other core subjects. Internal tracking shows pupils make expected progress over all key stages. Moderation takes place frequently at school, as well as involvement at deanery and diocesan levels to ensure accuracy. Data shows that achievement is good for all groups including those with additional needs. In class, pupils' responses and work demonstrate very good subject knowledge, including being able to make links between Old and New Testaments, scripture and church practices as well as being able to relate learning to their own lives. The quality of pupils' written work and verbal responses indicate a good level of religious literacy. Current data shows that this good attainment and progress is likely to be sustained.

This good achievement is made possible because the headteacher has put in place a programme of continuous professional development which has led to a culture of high expectations from all the staff. This is demonstrated in the questioning which encourages pupils to express their answers using the correct religious language and vocabulary. Pupils' interest in religious education was evident in all lessons observed during the inspection.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

Teaching is good with some examples of outstanding practice. Teachers ensure that there is a calm and positive climate which contributes to the learning taking place. Music is used well to support this. Pupils are interested, engaged and most want to fully participate in each lesson. Where a mini plenary is used it effectively refocuses and draws out further knowledge and understanding. Homework is used well to extend pupils' learning and also to research future topics. For example, a Year 2 lesson began with pupils' research on Saint Paul and then progressed using the information. The scheme of work used has helped staff increase their expectation of pupils and their own subject knowledge. In Year1 pupils interviewed the Catechetical Co-ordinator about being a Pentecost person. This opportunity gave pupils a chance not only to prepare relevant questions but also to learn how they could be Pentecost people themselves. Careful use of well scaffolded questions by both teachers and support staff ensures that pupils are challenged at appropriate levels and their religious literacy deepened. Staff are able to adapt their questions and explanations as appropriate. Work is differentiated throughout the school and pupils respond well to comments in their workbooks. Progression can be clearly identified throughout the school.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The leadership and management of religious education is very good. This is due to a leadership team comprising the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leader who ensure religious education permeates the life of the school. Together they have a clear understanding and appreciation of the Church's educational mission which they have communicated to all members of staff. The team are committed to continuous improvement in curriculum religious education and are skilled in supporting less experienced colleagues. Together they monitor record keeping, work scrutiny, teaching and questioning for higher level responses, as well as the evaluation of planning to inform future teaching needs. Carefully planned in-service, teachers' own subject knowledge and on-going assessment techniques ensure there is a good level of challenge for the more able pupils. There is well thought out continuous professional development for teachers and other adults included in the learning process. This ensures that all staff are fully able to support pupils in religious education lessons. The school leadership is fully committed to enabling staff to obtain the CCRS qualification and support them in this process. The school improvement plan clearly identifies issues for action and evaluates current provision for religious education. Governors are fully committed to the school and know it well. The experienced vice - chair of governors meets the headteacher frequently for a review of the current provision.

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

- Further develop the quality of teaching to ensure more outstanding lessons take place.
- Further develop staff subject knowledge through deanery moderation for all teachers.
- Continue to share good practice throughout the school.

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?

There were no key areas for development in this area identified in the last inspection. However, since then the school has continued to strengthen its Catholic life and to offer pupils a rich and varied experience of Church traditions and teachings. Family links are supported by sending copies of the 'Wednesday Word' each week. There are increased opportunities for pupils to plan and lead class worship, regular class masses and seasonal devotions, leading to a sense of ownership. The school was one of the first to be awarded Fairtrade accreditation which it has held for the past four years.

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

Grade 1

The school fully recognises religious education as a core subject which is given the highest priority. This is reflected in the generous staffing and budget devoted to religious education and the good quality of resources available to staff. Across the school at least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education which is planned, tracked and monitored with rigour. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are very well supported by the subject leadership team. The school has put in place a continuous professional development programme and very good support for new staff. Governors are well informed and committed to continuous evaluation of religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The parish priest from Our Lady and St Vincent considers the school's effectiveness as part of the education mission of the church to be outstanding.

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

Grade 1

The experience of prayer and liturgy for all is a major strength and clearly lies at the heart of this school. Pupils participate respectfully and with ease, and opportunities for personal quiet reflection permeate the school day. Older pupils in the Liturgy Group are confident in organising prayer and reflection sessions for younger pupils including leading the Rosary and providing opportunities for meditation. Pupils have opportunities to create their own prayers and further their own spiritual development. Examples of this were seen during the inspection. Pupils lead collective worship and experience a wide range of opportunities to develop their spirituality and engage in vibrant, dynamic and meaningful prayer. Each classroom has a prominent prayer focus which celebrates pupils' work and follows the cycle of the liturgical year. Worship is well planned, using visual presentations, bible stories, drama and song to promote pupils' interest and develop their thinking. The quality of singing is impressive and enriches worship. Key stage 2 pupils contribute to leading Sunday Mass in the parish each month through Liturgy of the Word and prayers of intercession. Key events in the Church's liturgical year are celebrated through special services and whole school Masses to which parents are invited. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. Chaplaincy is also a real strength and an integral part of the entire community, supporting the spiritual development of pupils and staff.

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

Grade 1

The commitment and contribution of the school community to the Common Good is a real strength of the school. There has been a great emphasis across year groups to encourage and empower pupils to know and understand their responsibilities to social justice both globally and in their local community. Examples include the activities of the Fairtrade group of Year 6 pupils who promote the message of justice and fairness rooted in gospel values. Pupils spoke eloquently of the theological ideas underpinning their understanding of the Common Good and social justice. They recognise that their actions and example can have a great effect for good within the world. A very wide range of charities are supported throughout the year including 'Mary's Meals' and support for the local food bank. Conversations with pupils indicate that supporting these organisations allows them to see gospel values put into practice. The school includes the life of St Vincent de Paul as an example of service to those in need and covers themes of inequality and injustice throughout the year. Assemblies and work in class all contribute to pupils' understanding of local and global issues. Families are supported by the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils clearly feel safe in school and said they felt valued by staff whom they described as wanting them to be the best they could be. They said they were all encouraged to respect each other and show care for their environment. They described the school as a community where everyone is valued. Pupils are given opportunities to show service and leadership through a range of responsible roles including as parliamentarians, sports leaders and monitors.

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 school makes every effort to maintain a strong partnership with parents and carers and works closely with them to develop a shared understanding of the mission of the school. Questionnaires indicate that parents support the work of the school and appreciate the high standard of education and the support for prayer, worship and Catholic Life. They are also given opportunities to express their views on their children's education. The school welcomes a number of parents as volunteer helpers in school and for trips. Parish links are also very good with regular involvement of staff, pupils and governors in parish liturgical, pastoral and social life. The parish newsletter regularly includes school events which enables parishioners to see it as a vital part of the community. The parish priest of Our Lady and St Vincent is a frequent visitor to the school. He acts as a valuable learning resource as well as meeting the headteacher and religious education team to plan masses and liturgies. There are excellent links with the diocese which is demonstrated through participation in training for both staff and governors. The headteacher is generous with her support for the diocesan inspection process as an inspector. She attends diocesan conferences and has chaired the Hertfordshire Catholic Headteacher's group. The governing body strongly promotes partnership with parents, parish and diocese.

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

Grade 1

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in developing and promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding in the way in which Catholicity pervades all areas of school life. The governing body works closely with the headteacher to ensure their clear vision of Catholic education and life is shared by the whole school community. Members of the governing body fully understand their roles and responsibilities and are well placed to be both supporting and challenging. They do this by keeping abreast of initiatives in religious education, regular meetings with curriculum leaders and support from the diocese through governor training. The headteacher and senior leaders are excellent role models who lead by example. They ensure that all staff participate fully in the religious life of the school which includes masses, religious assemblies, religious events and class visits. The mission statement 'Learning in the Light of Christ' underlines all of school life and is well known by the whole community.

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

- Continue to develop partnership with parents to ensure the concept of service to the community is well understood.
- Continue to develop pupils' involvement in preparing and leading acts of worship.