

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

Our Lady and St John's Catholic Primary School

Boston Park Road, Brentford, TW8 9JF

Date of inspection: 09 October 2015



A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 2

The rich curriculum, based fully on the Curriculum Directory, engages pupils well in their learning. The core staff that teach religious education provide excellent opportunities to develop the pupils' religious literacy. Resources are imaginative, with pupils contributing very well to the artefacts displayed, to help bring alive the curriculum directory content. Teaching in religious education draws on many aspects of the wider curriculum, including art, dance and drama, to support the pupils' growing understanding. While core team teaching is at least good and sometimes outstanding, the spectrum of staff involved in the delivery of religious education has been necessarily narrow because of considerable changes in the make-up of the staff. However, given the strength of the core team, there is genuine scope to extend staff involvement to a wider range of teachers. Pupils achieve well in acquiring religious literacy and this year more pupils than previously are on track to gain the highest available levels. The subject leader, exceptionally well supported by the senior team, ensures regular moderation and monitoring of the work and involvement in diocesan events and training. Governors have a very clear grasp of the importance of classroom religious education and an excellent understanding of how well children are doing. Classroom religious education makes a very good contribution to 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 Catholic life of the school is exceptionally rich, grounded firmly in tradition and practice. Children are given an excellent range of experiences of what it means to be a Catholic. The whole community understands that religious education is at the heart of the school. Worship and prayer are central to the daily order with pupils experiencing opportunities for reflection, creative moments for their own prayer, as well as traditional forms of prayer. Children flourish in this harmonious school community, and understand at their own levels, the importance of contributing to the Common Good. This they do excellently, growing in understanding of the Church's social teaching and global mission. Relationships with parents, the parish and the diocese are also excellent. The school is piloting the 'peer challenge', for example, for the diocese within its deanery cluster. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and senior leaders use their findings very effectively to constantly try for improvement. Staff, new to the school, are well inducted into its vibrant community life as are the many newcomers among the children. Governors make an excellent contribution to the school's Catholic life. They understand their roles very well in their strategic direction of the school. The Catholic life of the school is led excellently by the headteacher, senior team, and governors.

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 8 parts of lessons, a celebration of Mass, a Year 2 act of worship, 5 learning walks, and carried out four 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 in lessons, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of Our Lady and St John's School, Brentford 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
Mr Daniel Keane	Associate Inspector
Ms Kathleen Gilbert	Associate Inspector

Description of School

This voluntary-aided school is a one-form entry in the LA of Hounslow and the locality of Brentford. The school serves mainly the parish of St John the Evangelist, Brentford. Children also attend the school from parishes in Ealing, Osterley, Isleworth and Hounslow. All pupils from Reception to Year 6 are baptised Catholic. There are six Catholic teachers out of eleven staff. The school is oversubscribed. A significant number of staff are new to the school. The headteacher has been in post for a year.

There are 224 pupils on roll, with three pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHC). 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. Approximately a third of the pupils speak Polish as their home language. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Twenty-three pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number:	313 3502
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Headteacher:	Mrs Colette Acres
Chair of Governors:	Fr Gerard Quinn

Date of previous inspection:	22 March 2010
Previous Inspection grades:	Good

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 made significant progress in its journey towards excellence in curriculum religious education. The curriculum has been developed to ensure that it not only meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory but also to ensure that children have the opportunity to reach the highest available levels. Much work has been done to moderate work and to develop teachers' understanding as well as to promote the pupils' understanding of the Church's social teaching. The school has also sustained and further developed its strong Catholic life and its partnership with the diocese. The school has managed very well the changes in leadership both of the school and of religious education, and the changes in staff.

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

Grade 1

The school's new scheme of work ensures that it fully meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Links to the diocesan attainment targets are developing well and social justice, celebration, the Church and revelation are highlighted in the teaching cycle. On-going training is underway to support the understanding and methodology of those staff who are teaching religious education. Resources are excellent and staff and pupils find exceptionally creative ways in which to engage in learning. Children often bring imaginative artefacts from home that they create in response to their work in class. Work in school builds very well on the often strong foundation of Catholic tradition that many children bring from home. Progression is built well into the scheme of work with very strong scriptural foundations on which to build themes and topics.

Staff participate regularly in diocesan training. The subject leader is working further to develop in-depth materials to support the new curriculum. There is very good coverage of other major faiths, utilising to great effect, resources from the local area. Children benefit from visits to a synagogue, local Hindu shrines and to a mosque. The curriculum is developing well in providing well-considered opportunities for pupils to compare and contrast the differences and similarities between the practice of the Catholic faith and that of other major world religions.

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

Grade 2

Pupils take their learning in religious education very seriously. Their past progress in religious education has been similar to that in other core areas. However, in recent months there has been a rapid increase in the rates of progress of all groups of children, driven not least by the new curriculum and the work of the new coordinator for religious education. At this early stage of the term, the rapid improvement in the pupils' attainment in religious education is evident in their learning logs, their workbooks, and their verbal responses in class. There are significant developments in the pupils' progress in enhancing their religious vocabulary and in strengthening their ability to communicate about their faith.

Pupils achieve well overall in religious education. They have a good understanding of how to improve their work.

Pupils join the school with skills and knowledge that are very variable. Some pupils have little or no English. For the most able pupils, past attainment in religious education has been lower than could be expected. This has been partly because of the curriculum offered. The impact of the new curriculum is increasingly evident in the children's work but there has not yet been time for it to influence fully summative performances.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

Across the year groups, teaching is typically good and often outstanding. Nevertheless, the teaching of religious education is carried out currently by a very few staff. Teachers plan very well with imaginative resources and for ways in which to make the work accessible, exciting and inspiring for the children. At the same time, planning ensures that there are solid scriptural foundations for the work. Staff strive to deepen the pupils' understanding of their faith. Teachers' understanding of the content of the curriculum is growing rapidly through the excellent dissemination of the training in which the subject leader is involved. Clear learning intentions and outcomes characterise all learning as does the warm working relationship between pupils and staff. Pupils' progress is well supported by the on-going dialogue between staff and children, and by the regular written feedback on how to improve. Children are encouraged to take ownership of their own learning. Children build very well on their earlier learning as seen in the classwork on 'the little way', around the feast day of St Therese of Lisieux. Similarly, Year 3 were fully involved in their modelling task, relating to their work on the Trinity. Dance and drama in Year 4 consolidated the pupils' learning. Teachers' questioning of pupils is very helpful in drawing out their grasp of the topic and in leading them on to deeper insights. Support staff are very well deployed and generally engage fully in the lesson. Children respond readily to what is required of them by taking great care in their presentation and pride in their tasks. This was seen clearly in the pupils' practical work on the 'burning fiery bush' in Year 2 and in the 'crosses' project displayed around the school.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

The new subject leader has a very clear grasp of the importance of religious education in the Church's mission. Since coming into post, she has contributed very well to the daily Catholic life of the school. The quality of leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. In a short space of time, the subject leader, working closely with the headteacher and other staff, has driven important changes to the curriculum. This has meant that children now have the opportunity to aim for the highest available levels within the attainment targets. Likewise, the changes have resulted in ever deeper staff engagement in their study of the content and in their consideration of how they can best promote the children's religious literacy. The joint planning by the religious education team is very effective in engaging the staff. The subject leader has an excellent grasp of the areas of strength and development in the provision. Well-considered allocation of staff to classes as well as professional development is promoting at least good teaching. There is regular monitoring of pupils' work and classroom practice.

The assessment and tracking of the pupils' learning and progress is robust and in line with that of other core subjects. Staff are involved in regular moderation of work within the school. The coordinator participates in regular diocesan moderation meetings but is also involved in organising cluster moderation of the pupils' work. Although self-assessment is broadly accurate, the accompanying commentary provides too limited a picture of this thriving Catholic community. The

subject leader knows the department well and is committed to fulfilling the Church's global mission through the development of religious education in Our Lady and St John's.

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

- Take forward plans to develop the skills of all staff in teaching the religious education curriculum through sharing the current very good practice of the core team.
- Develop further the self-evaluation document to reflect more truly the work of the religious education department.

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 developed the way in which it involves pupils in the understanding of the Church's global mission. Each month there is a different focus to global responsibilities. A peace and mission group directs children's awareness of Catholic social teaching and helps them to put this into practice as in the work with a children's centre in Zambia and in the Gambia. Through the school's creative curriculum, children learn about other cultures and traditions. The 'little way week' is used to encourage children to make a difference to those in need.

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

Grade 1

Religious education receives the full allocation of 10% of curriculum time as recommended by the Bishop's Conference. The headteacher with her senior team ensure that a very strong Catholic ethos permeates school life. The subject leader is a member of the senior team, reflecting the priority given to religious education and Catholic life. Governors are closely involved in ensuring a strong Catholic ethos within the school. The budget is on a par with other core areas. The school website highlights the Catholic nature of the school. The professional development of the staff responsible for, and teaching religious education, is on-going and very effective. Support staff who want to study for a Catholic qualification are also supported and encouraged to do so. The very well-kept school environment and stimulating display reflects the importance of Catholic life. Non-Catholic staff support the school ethos very well, fulfilling what is expected in their contracts. The school's mission statement of delivering '...a curriculum through the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ' sums up the school's commitment to Catholic values.

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

Grade I

Prayer and worship are at the heart of the school's daily life. From staff prayer first thing in the morning, the day is punctuated by many structured and unstructured opportunities for prayer. The school environment leaves pupils and staff in no doubt as to the school's Catholic identity. The stimulating displays and artefacts around the school provide regular reminders of what the school is about. Pupils experience the wonder of the liturgical year through celebrations of mass, both in the parish and in the school, through the sacrament of reconciliation, and through other acts of worship, including the rosary. Children are actively involved in planning and leading worship. They use their good scriptural knowledge to very good effect in their prayers. All children are from Catholic families but non-Catholic staff are expected to, and do, uphold the school's ethos and participate in its prayer life. The school is meticulous in its evaluation of the opportunities for pupils' spiritual development across all year groups.

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

Grade I

The school community has a genuine commitment to the Church's call for justice and peace. Staff and pupils, at their own levels, appreciate the scriptural basis for their actions and those of the wider Catholic community. Children's gifts and talents are celebrated and they are encouraged to use them in the service of others. Year 6, for example, regularly support the children in the early years. Pupils are offered an extensive range of opportunities to be leaders in their community. They regularly plan and prepare liturgical celebrations. Others have the duties of prefects and head boy and girl. The school community is also generous in supporting local, national and international charities. The produce from the Harvest Festival Mass, for example, is shared with the Hanwell project for the homeless. They visit the local convent care home that looks after the elderly and the disabled and contribute to *Children in Need* and CAFOD. Children's centres in Gambia and Zambia are supported in the long-term with pupils using school sleepovers, for example, to raise funds. The respect and value accorded each individual pupil is exemplified in the weekly achievement assembly. Children thrive at the school. Several commented on the excellent teamwork and mutual respect within the school community.

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 school is exemplary in developing its key partnerships with parents, the parish, other local Catholic schools and the diocese. Parents' responses to the questionnaire were universally positive and they appreciate the secure Catholic environment that their children enjoy. They are welcomed into the school community for liturgical celebrations and other events. There is also a very strong commitment to vulnerable parents to help them do the best for their children. The majority of families belong to the local parish so that there is a real sense of belonging. The current chair is the parish priest who is a regular visitor to the school. Links with the diocese are excellent, with the

school participating in professional development and moderation activities regularly. Our Lady and St John is proactive in forming links with local deanery schools to pilot a 'peer-to-peer' challenge review system in local clusters for the diocese. Partnership with others is central to the school's understanding of itself.

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

Grade 1

The school has a deep understanding of its Catholic mission. It sees itself as a member of the diocesan family of schools and is very engaged in its local deanery cluster. The headteacher and leadership team demonstrate their full commitment to the Church's education mission through the drive to develop the understanding of the faith among staff and pupils. Staff, new to the school, are inducted well into its Catholic life as are those from other faith traditions. Governors participate enthusiastically in developing the Catholic life and share the drive for excellence, challenging success if needed. Regular visits inform their judgements of the school's progress. Recent surveys of parents show that leaders have a very sound grasp of the views of families and their hugely positive appreciation of what the school does for its pupils. The school's judgements on its work are accurate overall and understood by the staff at all levels.

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

- Take forward plans to develop days of recollection for the whole school.
- Review the mission statement to make it readily accessible to the whole school community.