

Our Lady Catholic Primary School

Woodhall Lane, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3TF

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 12 October 2017



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education requires improvement

- Teaching across the school requires improvement.
- There is little evidence of effective monitoring, tracking or data analysis in religious education.
- Questioning in lessons does not provide pupils with opportunities to explain or justify their thinking in religious education.
- Marking does not inform pupils of next steps in learning and is not consistent across the school.
- Additional adults are not used effectively in lessons to support pupils learning.
- Pupils are not sufficiently challenged and differentiation is not evident in lessons or in pupil books.
- There are weaknesses in the leadership and management of religious education.
- The religious education leader is not sufficiently supported to carry out her role, particularly in the time allocated to carry out her role.
- The school's self-evaluation is not accurate.

B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- The school motto permeates the school.
- Curriculum time for teaching religious education fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Prayer and worship play an important role in the daily life of the school.
- Pupils learn and are taught the understanding of a range of traditional prayers, beginning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- A mutual respect for all is evident across the school between staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Pupils are engaged in supporting those in need through their fundraising for the numerous charities they support.
- Pupils are actively engaged in the planning of prayer and worship and are confident in doing so.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the welcoming, kind and inclusive environment.
- The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and supports staff well.

Classroom religious education has the following strengths

- Pupils are very well behaved, articulate and eager to learn.
- Children take great pride in the presentation of their work.
- Teachers are beginning to use more creative approaches in the teaching of religious education, through the use of film, images and role play.
- The religious education leader is keen to improve the teaching of religious education throughout the school.

The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- School self-evaluation is not an accurate evaluation of all aspects of school life.
- Pupils do not have a thorough understanding of the theology that underpins their action for social justice.
- The governing body do not have systems in place to monitor and evaluate the schools strengths and areas for development.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Staff are now confident in cross referencing the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) with the current scheme of work. The school continues to develop marking to include more pupil targets for improvement and there is a developing understanding of levels of attainment. However this continues to be an area for development due to staff turnover and the lack of deanery moderation opportunities available to support the school.

The content of classroom religious education requires improvement

The content of the religious education curriculum for this Catholic school meets the requirements of the RECD. Pupils' work lacks differentiation or challenge for higher ability pupils. There is some evidence of creativity although this is not consistent across the school. Planning in religious education (RE) does not ensure progression and development at deeper levels as pupils progress through the school. There is evidence that pupils are being taught about other faiths. The structure, planning and content of this school's RE curriculum is weak and requires improvement.

Pupil achievement in religious education requires improvement

Pupil achievement in religious education requires improvement in this school. Pupils are articulate and are keen to learn in their lessons but this is not being matched in their achievement. An in-depth look at pupil books, including the previous year's books, along with discussions with pupils in lessons, confirmed that pupil achievement requires improvement. Record keeping on pupils' progress is limited and lacks both rigour and detail to support the development of RE across the school. There is insufficient evidence of tracking and monitoring of this core subject. Differentiation lacks challenge for the more able pupils and this was evident from looking at books, observing lessons and talking to pupils. Rigorous monitoring has been hampered by the lack of time that the RE leader receives in order to fulfill her role adequately. Planning lacks a consistent approach and learning objectives are not being met. Marking does not inform pupils about next steps and how to improve their work. Behaviour in lessons is of a high standard and work in books is well presented.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

There has been a considerable disruption to teaching through turn-over of staff and long term illness over the last year. No formal observation of religious education has taken place for some time. Teaching does not provide sufficient support or challenge and questioning does not allow for explaining or justifying thinking; differentiation in tasks is not evident. Therefore teaching requires immediate improvement. Pupils are well behaved and involved in lessons but expectations are not high enough. Pupils books are well presented, demonstrating that pupils take pride in their work, however marking is not sufficiently consistent in providing feedback on the next steps for learning. One pupil told inspectors that, 'I like RE lessons because they help me to learn more about what being a Catholic person means.' Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and there was some evidence of more creative approaches to deliver lessons such as the use of role-play, images and videos. The school now needs to capitalise on strengths available to bring about immediate improvements to teaching and learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education

requires improvement

Leadership and management of RE in this school require improvement. The school self-evaluation is inaccurate and not shared and owned by leadership at all levels. Feedback to governors is limited and mostly about the Catholic life of the school and not classroom religious education. Due to a lack of monitoring the leadership team do not have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. The RE leader does not have a regular allocated time to monitor the subject and this has led to a difficulty in implementing the change required. She is eager and capable to make the improvements needed.

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

- Review the leadership and management of RE as a priority.
- Introduce rigorous and systematic procedures for the monitoring of religious education to inform accurate judgements of teaching and learning.
- Raise standards of teaching and learning in RE across the school.
- Ensure that tasks in RE are differentiated and provide challenge to pupils of all abilities.
- Ensure that marking provides consistent developmental feedback to pupils so they know how to improve their work.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Child initiated prayer is now well established across the school and pupils are confident in planning and delivering prayer and acts of worship.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is good

RE has a high status within the school and is at the core of the school's daily practice. The Catholic identity and ethos of Our Lady's can be felt around the school. The school's mission statement; 'We learn to love and love to learn with Jesus' is evident around the school and is displayed for all to see. All staff take part in the Catholic life of the school and are prominent and active participants in their attendance at Mass and assemblies. RE is allocated a budget in line with other core subjects and has a good status within the school and parent community. Curriculum time for the teaching of religious education fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. RE prayer focus areas are on display in all classrooms; however some are quite basic and could be further developed.

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

Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school through class prayer, collective worship and assemblies. There is an outside prayer garden that is available to classes and pupils at any time and plans are in place for Stations of the Cross to be installed with support from the parental community. Child initiated prayer is now embedded across the school and pupils are both reverent and respectful in its delivery. This was evident when inspectors observed pupils in Year 6 who had planned and led a prayer session. Pupils are confident in making the Sign of the Cross in French and proud of their ability to do so. Pupils are progressively helped towards experiencing periods of reflection and are given regular opportunities to write their own prayers. Pupils, staff and parents are regularly invited to celebrate Mass both at the school and at the local parish church. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and celebrates Mass in the school and at the parish church, joining the local parishioners. He attends the weekly achievement assembly and makes regular visits to classrooms to embed the link between school and parish as well as supporting older pupils in preparation of liturgies. Education Sunday is celebrated at the parish church and is well supported by parents.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice – is good

The school's commitment to the Common Good and social justice is good. There is a sense of community, which is deepened by the school's celebration of its identity and involvement in the wider parish community. Pupils are keen to support the charities they have chosen and are able to talk about how they fundraise. Interviews with pupils showed they are beginning to understand the theology behind their efforts but this is not yet fully developed. Pupils are offered various roles of responsibility such as School Councillors, Young Leaders in the playground and Rights Respecting School ambassadors and they respond positively to these roles. The school supports pupils well in developing their gifts and talents and these are celebrated through assemblies. Pupils are proud of their school and the work they do in the community. During a pupil interview session with inspectors one pupil said, 'we are a Catholic school and we look deeply into our faith. Other schools may learn about Jesus but may not believe in Him.'

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**is good**

The school's partnership with parents, parish and the diocese is good. There is limited involvement with other Catholic schools and this would be of great benefit to Our Lady's school. The feedback from the parents' questionnaire was very positive and supported that parents are happy with the Catholic education on offer to pupils. Parents are invited to school celebrations and liturgies. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school and serves as a member of the governing body. The pupils, staff and parents benefit from his regular visits to the school and lessons. He is a welcomed support to the RE leader who meets with him regularly to plan Masses and liturgies. The headteacher and staff attend diocesan training and attend deanery inset days when on offer. The school has strong links with the local Catholic secondary school ensuring good transition arrangements for pupils.

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

The headteacher, governing body and staff are committed to the education mission of the church. There has been a considerable change in staffing over the last year along with long-term staff illness and this has impacted on further improvements being made. The RE leader has worked hard to ensure that child initiated worship is embedded in practice and delivery across the school and has the ability to continue to raise the profile of the Catholic life of the school. The school knows its strengths and areas for development well, although these were not accurately reflected in the self-evaluation documents provided for the inspection. The governing body are committed to ensuring they support leaders of this Catholic school to continue to grow and flourish.

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

- Re-evaluate the role of the RE Leader to ensure the allocation of time and resources to be effective in her role.
- Ensure that judgements and information made in the school self-evaluation are accurate.
- Develop a deeper understanding in pupils of the theology that underpins the Common Good.
- Update the school website with regular information for parents about what is being taught in RE and the Catholic life of the school.

Information about this school

- The school is a one-form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Welwyn Garden City.
- The school serves the parishes of Our Lady Queen of Apostles, Welwyn Garden City and St Bonaventures, Welwyn Garden City.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 89%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 5 % and from other faiths is 3 %. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 61%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 4.
- There are 3% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 1 has a statement of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is average.
- There is a well above below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 7 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (3%).

Department for Education Number	919 3382
Unique Reference Number	117464
Local Authority	Hertfordshire

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed Male Female
Number of pupils on roll	222
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paraic McKenna
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Corr
Telephone number	01707324408
Website	www.ourladys527.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@ourladys527.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2013
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Very Good

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 7 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended one act of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Ann Staunton	Lead Inspector
Miss Robina Maher	Shadow Lead Inspector
Miss Elizabeth Doonan	Associate Inspector
Miss Anne Moloney	Associate Inspector

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Vaughan House
46 Francis Street,
London
SW1P 1QN

T: 020 7798 9005
E: education@rcdow.org.uk
W: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education>