

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

St Agnes Catholic Primary School

Thoverton Rd, London, NW2 1RG

Date of inspection: 10 December 2015



A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 2

The new curriculum offers the pupils an excellent platform from which to develop their religious literacy. It is well grounded in the requirements of the Curriculum Directory and enriched very well by materials from recent diocesan training. There is a clear progression across the year groups and good achievement in religious education overall. Pupils progress almost as well in religious education as they do in the other core subjects. Resources are creative and inspiring with the potential to engage children really well in their study. Teaching is typically good with some outstanding elements. Checks on pupils' learning and moderation of work are built into the cycle of the school year. Marking and the assessment of the pupils' work is generally good. Pupils respond well to teachers' written comments. Pupils' attainment is carefully moderated with other schools and the diocese as well as internally. The headteacher works very effectively in conjunction with the subject leader to ensure that religious education makes a central contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The link governors for religious education have an exceptionally active involvement in supporting classroom religious education. The Catholic life committee includes classroom religious education in 'spirituality week'. As a result, governors have an excellent understanding of the next steps for the school. Classroom religious education at this stage of the school's journey is good rather than outstanding because, the new curriculum has yet to bed-in and opportunities for pupils to reach the highest available levels are not yet fully developed.

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 overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of this school is outstanding. St Agnes is a flourishing, inclusive Catholic community where children's sense of self-worth grows apace in parallel with their service to others. The staff team and pupils work closely together, supported fully by the local parish priest and governors, so that Catholic life permeates all aspects of the school. House captains spearhead the pupils' contributions to Catholic life and the school council looks after curriculum matters. Staff new to the school are well inducted into its Catholic life. There is a very strong emphasis on developing the pupils' experiences of the sacraments, liturgical celebrations, Catholic traditions and participation in Mass, both at school and in the local parish. Pupils' engagement in the Common Good is rooted in a growing understanding at their own levels of the social teaching of the Church. Partnership with parents, the parish and the diocese are very effective and strong. Parents are welcomed into the school for liturgical celebrations, share the parish mass with the pupils, join the school in prayer as well as forming their own prayer groups. Pupils are actively engaged in a number of charities both local and international. They support a Catholic school in India, raise funds for 'Cricklewood homeless' and support CAFOD to name a few. The governors, together with the parish priest, are very actively involved in evaluating and developing Catholic life at St Agnes. The school has a very robust approach to evaluating how well it fulfils its mission as a Catholic school.

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 10 parts of lessons, undertook a learning walk, two collective worship sessions, 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 pupils' work in lessons, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The inspection of St Agnes Catholic Primary School, Cricklewood, 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
Ms Niamh Brady	Associate Inspector
Miss Catherine Bryan	Associate Inspector
Miss Tracey Peters	Associate Inspector

Description of School

St Agnes is a one-and-a-half-form-entry Catholic Primary School in the LA of Barnet and the locality of Cricklewood. The school is oversubscribed. The school serves families from the local parish of St Agnes but pupils also come from the neighbouring boroughs of Brent and Camden. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 99%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 1%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 95%.

There are 353 pupils on roll, with 3 pupils with statements of special educational need or education, health care plans (EHCP). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an additional language is above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. There are 73 pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium.

Telephone:	020 8452 4565
e-mail address:	office@stagnes.barnetmail.net

DFE Number:	305/3502
URN Number:	101332

Headteacher:	Mrs Susan O'Reilly
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Gill Abbot

Date of previous inspection:	June 2010
Previous Inspection grades:	Outstanding

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 issues relating to classroom religious education have been addressed fully. The school has ensured that parental questionnaires include questions about religious education. Governors have received focused training to support them in their leadership role. The vice chair of governors, the parish priest, has been in useful contact with the diocesan adviser. At the same time, the school has taken part in diocesan training to develop the depth of study in the units of work and pupils' understanding. There is an on-going drive to reach for outstanding in the quality of pupils' progress in religious literacy and in the quality of teaching. Additionally, much has been done to refresh staffing, improve the environment, and sustain and build further the support of parents in developing the pupils' religious literacy.

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

Grade 1

The content of the religious education programme at St Agnes meets very well the requirements of the Curriculum Directory in all year groups. There are explicit links between the school's schemes of work and the four main areas of the Curriculum Directory and these are highlighted in teachers' planning. The resource framework for religious education in Catholic schools has been introduced recently into the school curriculum. In support of this transition, staff have accessed diocesan training to support their efforts in encouraging their pupils to respond at a deeper level than previously to the work in class. Each section of the work has well-considered information to help teachers' planning to promote the pupils' religious literacy as well as highlighting the relationships between faith and everyday life. Topics are carefully planned for the various year groups to ensure progression and increasing depth of study. Scriptural sources are embedded well in daily work in classrooms. Excellent resources and display support teaching and learning in religious education, including helpful materials to support the study of aspects of Judaism and Islam in each year group. Besides closely following the Church's liturgical year, the school also follows initiatives such as the Year of Faith and the current Year of Mercy. House captains, for example, have already begun their response to the start of the Year of Mercy.

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

Grade 2

Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive and have a positive impact on the generally good progress that they make in religious education. The new curriculum stretches the pupils' knowledge and understanding and challenges their thinking significantly. Most groups of children make good progress, and for some, such as those eligible for the pupil premium, progress is better than expected. Achievement at Key Stage 1 appears stronger than that at Key Stage 2. This is partly because the school is still developing opportunities and assessments to support pupils in reaching the highest available levels at Key Stage 2. Pupils are very confident in their use of religious language and readily apply their learning to their life and experience. Pupils are assessed at the end of each unit and internal and external moderation has helped teachers to ensure that they continue to improve the accuracy and consistency of their judgements. Pupils' progress is tracked regularly in line with

other core subjects. The school listens to parents' views with regard to religious education. As a result, the homework policy has been reviewed to ensure that teachers set regular religious education homework. Internal and external moderation of the pupils' work is part of the annual cycle of the school's work. The school is growing in confidence in the accurate assessment of Attainment Targets 1 and 2.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

Although some aspects of teaching are outstanding, overall, teaching in religious education is typically good. The monitoring cycle for religious education follows that of the main school procedures. Evaluations of teaching and learning are carried out by the senior team every half-term. The positive impact of the teaching on developing religious literacy is seen in the work in the pupils' books, and the very articulate manner in which they respond and talk about the topic in hand. Pupils are gaining rapidly in a rich vocabulary through which to consider and explore their understanding of scripture, liturgy and doctrine. Attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic in lessons, enjoy talking to adults about their experiences and demonstrate a growing understanding of religious ideas. In a mixed Years 1/2 group, for example, pupils' responses demonstrated clear advances in their understanding of their belief in God, and how this affects the way people act. In a Year 3 class, articulate pupils enthusiastically took pride in their learning and showed considerable depth in their knowledge of scriptural stories. They also discussed enthusiastically how the names allocated to Christ illustrate what people believe. In Year 6, a lesson on believers and non-believers, teaching was adjusted carefully to take into account the pupils' on-going responses. Marking is generally regular with pupils from the youngest classes responding well to teachers' helpful comments. However, although much has been done to develop teaching in the light of the new curriculum, not all initiatives are fully embedded in day-to-day work. There is scope, for example, to build teachers' confidence, subject knowledge and accurate interpretation of the units of work as well as to sharpen the focus of the assessment tasks so that pupils can more readily gain the highest available Level 5 in Attainment Target 1.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

The subject leader, together with headteacher, has a very clear vision for the direction of religious education in the school. This vision, summed up in the recently renewed mission statement, 'The family of St Agnes loves, learns and grows together as followers of Jesus', is shared whole-heartedly with all staff and governors. The subject leader and headteacher understand very well that religious education is at the heart of the school's work as part of the Church's mission. The drive to improve the at least good teaching, means pupils engage very rapidly in their learning to make generally good progress. Teaching in religious education is monitored and evaluated along with the other core areas to ensure that pupils' progress in religious literacy is rapid. The subject leader is aware of the strengths and areas for improvement among the staff, including subject knowledge relating to the new units of work. The subject leader is an active member, with governors, of the Catholic Life of the School group. The school is deeply involved with the local parish, the deanery and the Archdiocese. Work is moderated internally, with other primary schools, and with the diocese. There is good liaison with secondary schools and regular participation in diocesan training. All teaching staff have a performance management target related to religious education. Training to support these targets is in place. In the last year, for example, the focus was creativity and challenge in religious education lessons. There is a whole-hearted commitment to establishing and sustaining excellent religious education. However, there is scope to develop the opportunities further to allow the pupils to access Attainment Target 2.

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

- Further develop teaching and learning so that it is outstanding by;
 - building teachers' confidence, knowledge and accuracy of interpretation in respect of the new units of work
 - sharpening the focus of the assessment tasks in Years 5 and 6 so that pupils can more readily gain the highest available levels in Attainment Target 1
 - build in more opportunities to allow the pupils to access Attainment Target 2.

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 included areas of Catholic life in its consultation with parents. Governors have become much more closely involved than previously in developing the school's Catholic life. Additionally, the school has reviewed the pupils' experience of worship. Pupils are becoming involved in the planning and delivering of worship. Parental opportunities for worship have also developed. There are specific parent prayer groups during spirituality week as well as daily prayers at the grotto. The school is planning parent prayer sessions for the Year of Mercy. The vice-chair, who is also the parish priest, delivers professional development sessions for the staff. These sessions have included training for the Eucharistic Ministry and an understanding of the signs and symbols of faith as seen in the parish church to assist them in their classroom delivery of religious education. Governors are very active in the committee for the Catholic life of the school.

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

Grade 1

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops Conference with 10% of the timetable time allocated to the teaching of religious education. Religious education is the core of the curriculum. It is fully and creatively resourced, on a par with other core subjects. The mission statement, reviewed by all stakeholder groups, underpins all that takes place at St Agnes. All teachers, including those new to the school, are well supported and inducted into the school's expectations for religious education and for improving their practice. The school benefits from a high proportion of well-qualified Catholic staff. The accommodation is well maintained to a very high standard, with a dedicated area of Our Lady's grotto and a prayer garden under construction. The leadership of religious education is extremely well supported by senior leaders and in particular by the headteacher. Governors and the senior team offer effective and active guidance in developing and reviewing the place of religious education in the school.

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

Grade 1

Prayer and worship are integral to the life of the school. The depth, richness and variety of the experiences offered at St Agnes to all members of the community include quiet reflection, meditation and thrice daily class prayers. Families are encouraged to pray together and strengthen

the links between home, parish and school through the Advent travelling crib and Rosary bag in October and May. The school prayer, written especially by the parish priest for the children, is prominently on display. Parents are also encouraged to worship through parent- prayer groups and to join prayers with their children at Our Lady's grotto. Pupils have opportunities to create their own prayers and are encouraged to pray in many different ways. Collective worship is well organised, calm, reflective, motivational and relevant to the lives of the pupils, with themes that follow the pattern of the liturgical year. Plans are in place to further develop pupils' leadership of liturgy, evidenced, for example, in Years 3 and 4 books. Pupils are actively involved in the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacramental celebrations throughout the liturgical year. There are very strong links with the local parish, and the parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor. Vibrant displays and prayer areas celebrate diversity and create a very welcoming environment in which both spirituality and reflection are fostered. Among other examples are the artefacts reminding the whole community that each day is 'a new beginning'.

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

Grade 1

Pupils are provided with many opportunities to be of service both in the school, in the wider community and globally. Within the school, pupils can become house captains and serve on the school council. Year 6 pupils help younger years as play leaders as a matter of routine. Pupils have a strong commitment to helping others through fundraising for local, national and international charities. There are growing links between St Agnes and a school in India with two pupils and their families visiting in the Christmas holidays. St Agnes is fundraising to send the much-needed laptop to this Catholic school in Goa, for example. Locally, pupils support among other charities the 'Cricklewood homeless project'. The school contributes strongly to the Common Good through its very inclusive ethos. A multi-cultural international week is held annually so that pupils have the opportunity to celebrate their cultural heritage and diversity. Pupils with sometimes challenging needs are helped to remain part of this harmonious community. In its quest to extend to two-forms of entry, the headteacher has ensured that other local schools would not suffer, mindful of the whole area community. Gospel values pervade the school and pupils are very clear about what is right and wrong, and live up to the high expectations set for them. Pupils demonstrate impeccable manners. They treat each other with kindness and respect and consistently demonstrate a commitment to co-operation with staff and each other. Their gifts are celebrated through concerts, assemblies and outside events and all pupils are given opportunities to shine. As a result, children flourish at St Agnes and grow rapidly in their understanding of the Church's social teaching and the underpinning reasons for that work.

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 current headteacher has done much very successfully to involve parents as much as possible in the life of the school. Parents are very supportive of its work, particularly in promoting Catholic education. A recently completed questionnaire of 83 returns shows overwhelming support for the school and its leadership. Parents are given weekly newsletters and information through a highly informative website. They are also invited to Mass, prayer groups, liturgies and assemblies throughout the year. Links with the Diocese are very strong with teaching staff taking full advantage of opportunities for training both at diocesan and deanery level. Cluster meetings sustain the close collaboration with other Catholic primary and secondary schools. The diocesan advisor is a welcome visitor. The school has excellent relations with the parish. The parish priest visits the

school very regularly and is well known to the staff and pupils. The school is welcomed regularly into the parish church. He is generous with his time and leads training for staff on both Catholic life and classroom religious education as well as acting as vice chair of the governors. In this way, the governors are very well supported in their successful efforts to sustain the Catholic identity of St Agnes.

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

Grade 1

A particularly outstanding aspect of the Catholic life of St Agnes is the vibrant sense of a Christ-centred community where parents have complete trust in all staff and pupils to respect and value their children whatever their needs and differences may be. This is clearly demonstrated in the school's renewed mission statement and in the understanding of what it means throughout the school community. A touching display board shows the footprints of each school member as they '...follow Jesus...'. The current headteacher has brought a freshness and a deep understanding of the school's place in the Church's global mission. Unstinting determination, supported by her committed senior team and an excellent governing body are providing staff and pupils with very high quality Catholic education. There is a true sense of sharing the responsibility for the school's mission among the community of St Agnes. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate so that much has been done in recent times from an improved environment to improving outcomes in religious education and Catholic life generally. The governing body takes great care to fulfil its responsibility to protect the Catholic ethos, supporting diocesan and school priorities, and taking a close interest in the school's Catholic life. There is openness to change, development and improvement which ensures there is a freshness about how the mission statement is achieved.

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

- Develop even further the opportunities for and the practice of the pupils in contributing their talents in the celebration of the liturgy.