

# St Scholastica's Catholic Primary School

Kenninghall Road, Hackney, London E5 8BS

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 16 November 2016



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The religious education curriculum is very well planned to allow pupils to deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith.
- Through a wide range of Catholic practices and spiritual experiences, pupils learn very well to put their learning about the faith into the way they manage their daily lives.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well in religious education given their starting points when they join the school.
- The impact of teaching on children's learning about, and from, the Catholic faith is excellent overall. Nevertheless, there are still some missed opportunities to tailor provision more closely to the wide range of learning needs.
- The curriculum provides many excellent age-appropriate opportunities for learning about other faiths.
- Work in religious education is regularly moderated internally and the school is deeply involved in diocesan moderation activities.
- The religious education coordinator models excellent practice. She is particularly innovative in her approach to assessing pupils' progress. At the same time, she takes forward developments in the religious education curriculum that encourage both staff and pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- The governors and headteacher support the development of religious education very well.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and used honestly to improve all aspects of practice.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Religious education is at the heart of the school.
- Religious education receives its full allocation of 10% of taught time at each key stage and thus meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference.
- Resources and accommodation match that available to other core areas.
- Senior leaders and governors, together with the local parish, promote excellently the Catholic life of the school. All children participate in the daily practice whatever their faith traditions.
- Worship and prayer are built into the school year and follow closely the liturgical calendar. Daily and weekly practice promote very many and varied opportunities for prayer, liturgical worship, and quiet reflection. Children sing their hearts out during worship, expressing joy in their participation although they are not yet fully involved in the planning of liturgy in all key stages.
- Children flourish at St Scholastica's. They understand why it is important to help others, especially those worse off than themselves. They contribute very well to the Common Good, particularly locally.
- Pupils are quick to show concern for those less fortunate than themselves, offering practical help as well as prayer for those in need.
- Partnerships with the diocese, the parish and above all parents are especially strong. Governors are well grounded in the parish and evaluate the impact of the school through first-hand experience.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

The school was asked, at the last inspection, to strengthen its assessment practice in religious education. In particular, it was asked to ensure that pupils were more aware of what was required to improve their work. Continuing professional development has targeted the assessment practice of the staff so that all pupils are assessed against the diocesan attainment targets. Progress is tracked termly. Pupils have a target sheet for each topic, allowing pupils and staff to track progress and progression. Pupils self-assess their strengths and new knowledge termly. Teachers' marking and feedback supports them well in this evaluation. Much good work has been undertaken to improve teachers' marking and pupils' responses to the 'green pen' questions. There has been a drive to ensure that teachers challenge each group of pupils effectively.

### The content of classroom religious education

**is outstanding**

Schemes of work outline explicitly the coverage of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory at the start of each topic. Age group statements complement the four sections of Revelation, The Church, Celebration and the Life of Christ. The religious education curriculum also provides for the study of other faiths, including Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam. There is evidence from pupils' work, even from the earliest years, of their work in Judaism, for example. Cross-curricular work across other study areas complements and re-enforces this learning. A planned visit to a mosque and links with a Jewish school also enliven the study of other faiths. Progression is well built into the work so that year on year pupils can grow in understanding. The current framework is supporting well the pupils' religious literacy and is evident in the pupils' responses to religious narratives. They are more able than previously to make the links from their study to their daily lives.

### Pupil achievement in religious education

**is outstanding**

Pupils' achievement in religious education has steadily improved since the last inspection. Teachers' evaluation of pupils' attainment and progress are more accurate than previously because of a deeper understanding of what is expected for particular levels. Pupils achieve exceptionally well from their starting points with almost a third reaching the highest available grades by Year 6. Staff focus particularly on deepening the pupils' understanding through robust probing and questioning. Children learn religious language very early on. For example, children in Year 1 were able to talk about the Messiah in the context of the genealogy of Christ. Although some pupils are not able to explain the meaning of the term in discussion, pupils of all ages are developing their religious literacy well. The previous Year 6, for example, were able to review the different phases of the Nicene Creed and to consider at their own level the associated Church history from the Council of Nicaea up to the present time. Through such carefully managed activities, groups of pupils are able to achieve the highest available levels of attainment. From sometimes very low beginnings on joining the school, children make outstanding progress to reach at least expected attainment levels and sometimes to exceed them. Work in religious education is moderated regularly internally and the school is involved deeply in diocesan moderation activities.

**The quality of teaching****is outstanding**

The impact of good and better classroom practice on the pupils' learning at St Scholastica's makes for outstanding learning and progress. Pupils benefit greatly from a wide range of teaching strategies that enables pupils to learn in the style that suits them best. Religious knowledge and understanding are expressed through a variety of written genre and other performance channels, including music, dance and drama. This has the result of encouraging children's confidence so that they are able to grow in the ability to re-tell narratives and express their understanding of the messages inherent in the text. A major strength of the teaching is the precision and clarity of intended learning outcomes. Careful planning builds carefully on children's earlier learning. The school's work to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, evident in all lessons, is seen clearly in how pupils try to apply their learning to their daily lives. Excellent resources engage pupils and generate real curiosity, often expressed through play in reliving the messages from scripture. Attitudes to learning are outstanding, supported very well by warm working relationships. Pupils respond very willingly to teachers' helpful comments to support them in improving their work. However, in some lessons, misconceptions are not always picked up and children's errors remain. There is scope to develop pupils' learning further through more collaborative activities and through better opportunities for extended writing.

**The leadership and management of religious education****are outstanding**

The coordinator of religious education has a very clear grasp of the strengths and areas for development in religious education, particularly across Years 1 to 6. Much work has been done to establish the current curriculum and support staff in the development of their subject knowledge. The coordination of religious education is led by a senior leader, demonstrating the high priority given to religious education in the school. The coordinator is at the forefront of innovation with regard to establishing progress data for the pupils' achievement in religious education. She models excellent practice and works very successfully to monitor, improve and support teaching so that it is mainly good or better. The governors and headteacher support the development of religious education very well.

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

- Provide further opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing, particularly in relation to how their understanding of the faith shapes their practice.
- Provide even more opportunities for pupils to engage with each other in collaborative learning activities.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection, the school was asked to sharpen the role of leaders and governors in monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school. It was also asked to encourage staff to study for a Catholic qualification. Although few staff currently hold a Catholic qualification, the coordinator of religious education is registered for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. She has been very well supported by the diocesan advisor in her understanding of the role of the subject leader. Governors and school leaders are closely involved in the school's Catholic life and have a firm grasp of what it means to be a Catholic school. Following the last inspection, an audit was put in place to ensure that governors held the school to account. Members of the governing body regularly scrutinise targets and provide challenge in the Catholic life of the school. Additionally, pupils are more active than previously in planning collective acts of worship. They are very willing to contribute their ideas on prayer, readings and hymns. The school choir leads confidently the singing in celebrations of the Mass.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

**is outstanding.**

Religious education receives its full allocation of 10% of taught time at each key stage. Religious education is very clearly at the heart of the school. The school community rejoices in its mission statement of '...educating children in the spirit of the Gospel of Christ'. Resources allocated to religious education are similar to that of other core subjects. Classrooms with their prayer tables and the corridors with their religious artefacts and displays demonstrate how over the year religious experiences are central to the provision for the pupils. The subject leader, a senior member of staff, is very well supported by the headteacher and governors and by the parish priest of the adjacent parish. Governors are often local to the area and attest the importance of religious education to the school and its families.

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

**is outstanding**

Pupils and staff pray the mission statement in the form of the school prayer even although the full version is not readily accessible to all. Nevertheless, the school lives its aims through the many opportunities for prayer. Pupils pray three times each day within the classrooms. These opportunities also afford the pupils a wide range of pupil-led as well as adult-led occasions, particularly for the older pupils. They support and lead parts of assemblies and, above all, raise their voices in praise of God through their joyful singing. The school community regularly celebrates Mass in the parish church with the school choir providing the music. Pupils have opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and there is support for the First Communion preparation in the parish. Besides liturgical celebrations, the school also ensures pupils experience traditional Catholic practices. These include examples of local involvement in the wider community. For example, pupils hold their May procession and crown Our Lady at the local hospice. The school calendar is driven by the Church's liturgical year.

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

**are outstanding**

Pupils understand at their own levels that they are part of God's family and have a role to play in the wider community, based on the message of Christ. They are quick to show concern for those less fortunate than themselves, offering practical help as well as prayer for those in need. Pupils do strive

to put their faith into practice, and can be heard explaining to each other how and why this should be. Pupils support a number of local projects, are involved in national organisations such as CAFOD, and are expanding their international links through the 'book bus'. Pupils are happy at St Scholastica's and flourish. Their spiritual, moral and social development is promoted very well so that they flourish in all aspects of their learning and development

**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**

**is outstanding**

The school has excellent links with the parish and with parents. The parish priest, who is also the chaplain, speaks highly of the school's work with parents in supporting families in their Catholic practice. He visits the school regularly. Of the responses to the school's Catholic questionnaire, the overwhelming majority were very positive. There are also excellent diocesan links. The school participates in a number of activities at diocesan level. For example, the coordinator is part of the core diocesan moderation team on assessing pupils' work. Governors live within the school's catchment area and are active in the parish. They know the school-parish community well. There are also a number of growing links with other faith communities.

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

**is outstanding**

Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. The school has a quiet but deep understanding of itself as a Catholic school. Leaders and governors, alongside staff, are fully committed to the Church's mission in education. Rich opportunities enable staff and pupils to experience a Catholic way of life in their day-to-day living. The school expresses its Catholic identity in a wide range of ways although there is more to do to highlight in routine ways the role model of the school's patron, St Scholastica. Staff, new to teaching and to the school, are well supported. The high proportion of Catholic staff contributes much to the Catholic life of the school. Governors offer excellent support for the school's Catholic life, not least through their grassroots links with the local parish.

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

- Highlight a succinct version of the mission statement so that it is immediately accessible to all members of the school community.
- Ensure that children focus sharply on the model provided by St Scholastica to support them in developing their Catholic practice.
- Make sure that the younger pupils have further opportunities to become involved in planning and leading small acts of worship.

## Information about this school

- The school is a one-form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Hackney, East London.
- The school mainly serves families from the local parish of St Scholastica's. Some pupils also join the school from the adjacent parishes of St Jude's and Our Lady of Good Counsel.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 90%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 6.3% and from other faiths is 0.98%. Approximately 2.72% of pupils have no known faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is close to 100%. Three teachers have a Catholic qualification and 8 teach religious education.
- The proportion of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities is above average. Of these pupils, one has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from other than white British heritages is high and the number from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is an above average rate of families claiming free school meals with 109 pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

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| <b>Department for Education Number</b> | 204/3659 |
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b>         | 100274   |
| <b>Local Authority</b>                 | Hackney  |

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                 | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                | Voluntary aided  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>            | 3-11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>               | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on roll</b>       | 226  |
| <b>The appropriate authority</b>      | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                          | Mrs Ann McKenna-Slade  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                    | Mrs Naomi Mullholland  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>               | 020 8985 3466  |
| <b>Website</b>                        | <a href="http://www.st-scholasticas.hackney.sch.uk">www.st-scholasticas.hackney.sch.uk</a>               |
| <b>Email address</b>                  | <a href="mailto:nmullholland@st-holasticas.hackney.sch.uk">nmullholland@st-holasticas.hackney.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>    | 06 April 2011  |
| <b>Grade from previous inspection</b> | 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, the headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection, 9 lessons or part lessons were observed and a learning walk undertaken. The inspectors attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of pupils' work in lessons, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector

Mrs Monica McCarthy

Associate Inspector

Mrs Kathleen Gilbert

Associate Inspector

Diocesan inspection has four grades:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- causing concern

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