

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

3 Broadmeads, Ware. SG12 9HY

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 8 November 2018



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The standard of religious education offered by the school is outstanding.
- The content of religious education fully meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory in a lively and creative way.
- Pupils are religiously literate and can articulate their knowledge and understanding of religion in a meaningful and purposeful way.
- Pupils achieve well in religious education and standards of attainment are as good as, and in some cases better than, in other core subjects.
- High quality teaching and well planned innovative lessons ensure that pupils engage with and enjoy their learning.
- Additional adults are deployed well and fully support pupils to become successful learners.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent, they are keen to do well.
- Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary, they are friendly, confident, articulate ambassadors for their school.
- School leaders have a clear vision for the school and continue to develop and embed structures to ensure high quality teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders model excellent practice and are passionate in their desire for the school to be a place of excellence.
- Governors are highly knowledgeable about the school and support and challenge leaders to continue to improve outcomes for pupils.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- Religious education is central to the life of the school, it permeates all daily activities.
- The school fully meets the requirement for religious education to be given 10% curriculum time as laid down by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- The school Mission Statement 'To Live, Love and Learn Joyfully in the Family of Christ' is actively lived by all members of the school community.
- Beautiful displays reflect the school's Catholic identity and enrich the learning environment for all.
- Prayer and worship are at the heart of life at the school and pupils participate respectfully and with reverence in prayer opportunities.
- Pupils are offered excellent opportunities to answer the call to serve others through a range of responsibilities and activities.
- Pupils lead acts of worship, prayer sessions and fund raising events and publish a vibrant newsletter outlining their efforts.
- The partnership between parents, school and parish is strong and highly effective. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their praise of the school.
- The headteacher and her team are passionate in their leadership and ambition for the school.
- Governors demonstrate a real commitment both to the education of pupils and for a strong Catholic ethos to permeate all areas of school life.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the previous inspection the teaching and learning of other faiths has improved significantly. There is now a planned cycle of learning across the school including visits to places of worship and visiting speakers being invited into school. The new scheme of work is fully embedded and staff are confident in understanding the requirements and coverage of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). Planning clearly identifies objectives from the RECD and where appropriate the attainment focus for assessment. The introduction of 'The Big Question' and 'Godly Play' are developing pupils' ability to think deeply and promote knowledge and understanding of the response of faith to ultimate questions about human life, its origins and purpose.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of classroom religious education fully meets all the requirements of the RECD. All four areas of the RECD are carefully mapped across the key stages. In addition to a published scheme, the school uses other resources to enrich the learning of the pupils and develop further aspects of Catholic Social Teaching. Well-planned programmes of study build pupils' skills year on year. The introduction of 'Godly Play' and 'The Big Question' have greatly enhanced pupils' enjoyment of religious education and both have had a significant impact in developing pupils' theological understanding, encouraging them to think more deeply about their responses and questioning. During a 'Big Question' discussion Year 2 pupils commented that they see God '...when I look at my friends and family. When they use kind words or help other people.' and that 'Sometimes we don't know where to go or what to do but we have to trust in God to show us.' Religious education is well resourced and these resources are used to great effect to enrich learning experiences. In Early Years Foundation Stage a torch was used to effectively to introduce the Angel Gabriel and the 'Godly Play' figures enhanced pupils' understanding during a lesson on the Annunciation.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

The achievement of pupils in religious education is good and in line with, and in some cases better than, that achieved in other core subjects. Pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to their learning and these have a real impact on the progress they make. Assessment of pupils' work is robust and rigorous and the school participates in deanery and diocesan moderation events to continue to develop their moderation practice and ensure the accuracy of their judgements. Pupils know and understand what they need to do in order to improve their work and they can take informed decisions on setting targets for their own learning. Pupils' religious literacy is good and they are confident in their use of religious language in both discussions and written work.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

Teaching in religious education is outstanding and never less than good in any key stage. It is creative and engages pupils in their learning. Teachers know their pupils very well and have high expectations of them. They plan lessons which engage and challenge pupils and create a highly positive environment in which to learn. They create a real enthusiasm for the subject. Drama, art and music are used exceptionally well to enrich learning experiences as was clearly evidenced in a lesson where pupils were acting out the story of Abraham and Sarah. This creativity empowers pupils to move on in their learning and in this case be able to make a link with modern day refugees. Teachers demonstrate very strong subject knowledge which they use when questioning pupils to deepen their understanding and develop their thinking. Additional adults are deployed very effectively and are confident in supporting pupils' learning to ensure that all are successful learners. The quality of the work in pupils' books demonstrates the high regard they place on religious education. The newly

introduced feedback marking initiative allows for immediate teacher/pupil discussion of next steps, and this leads to pupils setting themselves questions thus deepening their understanding within the lesson.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is outstanding

There is a strong clear vision among all school leaders for Sacred Heart to be an excellent place of learning where all pupils can grow in the family of Christ. Stakeholders have a dynamic and creative vision for the school and the central role of religious education within it. Highly effective systems are in place to track and monitor pupil progress at all levels, staff participate in school, deanery and diocesan moderation meetings to ensure assessment of pupils work is accurate. Work scrutinies, lesson observations and a subject evaluation week enable leaders to identify strengths and areas for development quickly and set up action plans. Careful, well planned strategic planning and appropriate induction and training have seen a smooth transition from the previous religious education coordinator and ensure that standards continue to be built upon. The new subject leader models excellent practice and alongside the headteacher is passionate about the school consistently striving for excellence.

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

- To implement the new Age Related Standards (3-19) in Religious Education programme.
- To further develop challenge into teaching to ensure consistently high levels of progress throughout the school.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Pupils have a secure understanding of the call to action and social justice. They are provided with exciting and varied opportunities to put this into practice in the community. The school has developed its links with other Catholic schools and staff regularly join other schools for moderation purposes. The headteacher has been chair of the local deanery of schools and has been instrumental in developing the peer to peer support system. Staff and governors regularly attend training offered by the Diocese of Westminster.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Religious education is at the heart of the school and enhances the quality of Catholic education offered. Religious education receives 10% of curriculum time and funding for the subject is generous and in line with that of other core subjects. Governors and senior leaders offer outstanding support and active guidance in developing and reviewing religious education in school. The importance of religious education is clearly evident in the high-quality vibrant classroom displays, including prayer tables dutifully monitored by pupils. The beautiful displays in corridors, the 'Heart Room' and outside areas of the school such as the prayer garden are added testimony to the centrality of religious education within the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about religious education. They feel very involved and enjoy being included in celebrations, Mass and assemblies; one parent commented that 'being a Catholic school makes you feel more family orientated'.

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

is outstanding

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. All staff provide innovative and creative experiences to enrich the prayer life of the pupils. Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation are offered regularly and the parish priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school. Sacred Heart is fully involved in the 'Adoremus' project, following the recent National Eucharist Congress in Liverpool. Pupils are deeply committed to preparing and leading worship and prayer opportunities and take a leading role in offering all pupils the chance to learn and say the rosary and other prayers at the lunch time prayer club. Pupils actively engage in writing their own prayers and are encouraged to write a prayer at home for the class prayer book. The introduction of the travelling nativity was a very popular initiative last year and thoroughly enjoyed by pupils and their families as is evidenced by the lovely pictures sent into school by parents. Daily meditation through 'Meditatio' for the whole school, and time for reflection at the beginning or end of religious education lessons provide pupils with the opportunity to think about their relationship with God.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice

is outstanding

Pupils have a secure understanding of the call to action and service and an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. They see themselves as part of a community with responsibility for other people. They are keen to take on this responsibility of service and are creative in the ways they can demonstrate this. The exciting buddy system fosters a family feeling but is only one of many ways of recognising how to help others within their school community. Their commitment to respond to social injustice and needs is evidenced by the seriousness and dedication they give to their roles on the school council, as members of the chaplaincy team and as 'Mini Vinnies'. Embedded within the day to day events of the school is the understanding that every

person is a unique individual in the eyes of God and that each person is called to be instrumental in ensuring that people can live out their lives in a just and fair world. Pupils have engaged in a variety of projects to demonstrate this including harvest teas for the elderly within the local community, collecting food for the local food bank and the 'Junior Dragons Den Apprentice' programme to raise funds towards helping people feel part of the community and establish friendships. Further afield pupils have been involved with projects such as Fairtrade and the World Land Trust project in Ecuador.

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 outstanding

The school has established strong, vibrant links with parents who are wholesome in their praise for the school, 'all my children have had an amazing experience.' '...I cannot praise it enough.' Relationships with parents begin very early with a special celebration in the parish church where new families are blessed and welcomed in the family of the school. Parents are kept updated on what is happening in religious education in school via regular newsletters and the 'Wednesday Word' is sent home each week so that parents can share the gospel message with their children at home. Parents are welcomed to join the school for assemblies, special events and Mass. Links with the local parish are developing strongly. The parish priest is a welcome visitor in school celebrating Mass and assemblies as well as joining pupils in class and for lunch. Classes now take turns to join the parish for Mass in the church participating in the readings and leading the singing. A recent harvest tea held for the older parishioners was a very special occasion and thoroughly enjoyed by all. Pupils and staff enjoy participating in diocesan activities with a group of pupils recently enjoying a retreat at the Niland centre as well as attending the Advent carol service and the Good Shepherd Mass. Pupils comment that attending these events makes them feel connected to the wider Catholic community. All staff regularly take advantage of the training opportunities offered by the diocese to improve their practice and the participation of the head teacher and deputy head teacher at diocesan conferences ensure that links are strong.

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

is outstanding

The school Mission Statement 'To Live, Love and Learn joyfully in the Family of Christ' is shared by all in the school community and is an integral part in all school policies. Senior leaders are fully committed to the Church's mission and governors are highly proactive in their support of the school, sharing in the drive and ambition to make the school a Christ-centric place of learning. Governors maintain a visible presence in the school attending assemblies, celebrations, Mass and visits to classes. They know the school very well. The head teacher is dynamic and creative in empowering pupils and staff to take a leading role in the school. Along with the deputy head teacher, she is an excellent role model continuously driving the school forwards. School leaders are passionate about ensuring that Sacred Heart provides the best opportunities for both staff and pupils. The behaviour of the pupils is of the highest standard and this reflects highly on the excellent leadership and management displayed by all adults working in the school.

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

- Continue to develop home-school-parish links through prayer opportunities as well as communication via the newsletters.

Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Ware in the local authority of Hertfordshire.
- The school serves the parish of Sacred Heart of Jesus and St Joseph, Ware.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 87%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 5.2% and from other faiths is 2.8%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 69%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 1.
- There are 11.7% 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 below average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average.
- There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 5 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (2.3 %).

Department for Education Number	9193424
Unique Reference Number	117493
Local Authority	Hertfordshire

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 -11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	210
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Timson
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Fusi
Telephone number	01920 461678
Website	www.sacredheart312.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@sacredheart312.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 November 2013
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Grade 1 Very Good
The Catholic life of the school	Grade 1 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 1 assembly and a number of acts 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.

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