



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY SOULS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates July 9th and 14th 2010
Reporting Inspector Teresa Quick

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Mark Cunningham
School address	Mallard Close Acocks Green Birmingham B27 6BN
Telephone number	0121 464 6780
E-mail address	enquiry@holysoul.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2007
DCSF School Number	330/3327
Unique Reference Number	103429

Headteacher Mr Kevin Kelly

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 6 full religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. She observed the school's work, including Mass and assembly and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and pupils' work.

Information about the school

Holy Souls Catholic Primary School is a large school near to the church of the Sacred Heart and the Holy Souls in Acocks Green in Birmingham. There are 408 pupils on roll between the ages of 4-11 years, of whom 86% are baptised Catholics. Most pupils are of white British heritage, but there has been a recent influx of pupils from Poland and the surrounding nations forming 15% of the school population. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is increasing and is above national expectations. There are pupils from southern India and a minority of individual families of other world faiths. The school draws some pupils from areas of socio-economic deprivation. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special needs and / or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

Holy Souls is an outstanding Catholic school. The school is excellently led by the headteacher. The deputy headteacher, who is also the subject leader, is an outstanding leader. There is a strong senior management team. There is an excellent ethos of working together across the year groups and within the school. The whole school community works well together. It is a warm caring school where pupils understand the mission statement and say "It is a caring school, a place of learning where they pray together and where everyone is important. It is easy to make friends." The Catholic ethos permeates the whole school environment. There is excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The high level of Catholic staff with a very good knowledge of RE supports the outstanding provision for RE. Teaching promotes purposeful learning, enjoyment, good progress and attainment as pupils move through the school. They understand the mission of the school which is central to its life. The mission statement is the bedrock for all learners and learning in the school. Care guidance and support is excellent. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They are happy to take on roles around the school and in the playground. School is a happy place for the pupils which they say is calm and relaxed and you are able to work. There are high expectations of all pupils to achieve their full potential. Pupils participate well in and can plan and lead collective worship.

Pupils make good progress due to the good and often outstanding teaching and the high quality support provided by the teaching assistants. Pupils' behaviour during the inspection was exemplary both in lessons and around the school. It is a key strength of the school. Many pupils enter school with knowledge and understanding of the faith and its practices well below what could be expected for their age. Most pupils leave the school in Year 6 with standards that are above what is expected for their age. They enjoy their learning. A contributory factor is that planning meets their needs: teachers work well planning learning across the year teams.. The provision for RE is outstanding. The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding teaching observed. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. Assessment is now rigorous, giving a clear picture of achievement and learning in RE and provides information for planning the next steps in learning. The diocesan RE scheme has been adapted and forms the basis of the RE curriculum. It is enriched with retreats for both the staff and pupils, together with visits. The pupils gain an insight into other faiths through their One World Month. There is a highly effective sex and relationship education (SRE) curriculum. The RE curriculum is very broad but all areas of the curriculum are well covered. The school has started to work towards having a more cohesive curriculum for RE with formalised links to other subjects. The staff are committed to nurturing and developing each pupils' journey of faith and to follow the

example of Jesus to love and respect everyone. Pupils demonstrate reverence and respect during individual and collective worship and show a developing maturity of faith.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. RE is a priority in the school's improvement plan. The self evaluation at all levels is grounded in accurate analysis. The subject leader with the headteacher inspires the school community to work towards meeting or sustaining an ambitious vision. The subject leader has been given the time to monitor and develop the provision for RE and the Catholic life of the school and be a leader for the care and guidance of the pupils throughout the school. This has been effective in the support for improvement in RE. Other teachers now have the knowledge and understanding to support planned improvements. Morale is high and belief in the school's success runs through all levels of staff. The governing body is developing in its role as a critical friend. Governors have a good understanding of the needs of the school. They are well informed through their own contact with the school, and the reports by the headteacher and subject leader. The parish priest, who is also the vice-chair of governors, is a regular visitor to the school and is well known to the pupils. Governors are developing in the knowledge of what is required of them, have made organisational changes to make their working practices more effective and are providing challenge to the school. The link governor's role is developing well. The school self evaluation is very good. The leaders know their school well. The self evaluation is accurate and shows the improvement made in RE since the time of the last inspection and the vision for improvement. The school is not complacent; there is a pursuit of excellence in Catholic education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain and extend the development of the curriculum in RE to become a more cohesive curriculum with links to other subjects.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils make good progress in RE. Most pupils arrive at school with knowledge, understanding and experience of the faith that is well below what could be expected for their age. Behaviour is outstanding. The school is inclusive and everyone feels valued. Pupils feel safe and secure in school. The care, guidance and support ensure that pupils have respect for the staff and the confidence to learn. Good progress is made by all pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Pupils are given a very good start to their religious education in the Reception Year. RE is given a high status within the school and is a contributory fact to all pupils making good progress. Learning in Year 1 is very good because of vibrant teaching and small group support. Year 2 pupils generally have a good and developing understanding of the life of Jesus, the miracles and parables. The good and outstanding teaching continues throughout the Key Stage 2 years. In Year 6 pupils have an understanding of the liturgical year and good sacramental knowledge and have a developing understanding of their moral responsibilities. Pupils take part in and lead assemblies and prayer services. Pupils have a developing knowledge of the traditional prayers of the Church and can write and say their own. Pupils show a maturity of approach and are becoming independent learners in RE. ICT is used to promote independent learning in RE.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. From Key Stage 1 pupils develop a clear knowledge of the mission statement. The understanding develops as they move through the school. Together the school and the priest enable the pupils to achieve outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils gain insight into the beliefs of other faiths through their One World Month. The culmination this term was a wonderful celebratory One World Mass for the whole school and the parish community in church, during the inspection. Pupils from an early age are taught to understand right from wrong and of their developing moral responsibilities as citizens. They understand the high standards expected of them. Pupils enjoy the Masses, prayer services and RE lessons. They are happy events. The school enables pupils to become active independent learners in their journey of faith. Pupils respond generously to the charities they choose to support whether local or international. These have included the Rwanda Appeal linked to the Birmingham Catholic Partnership, Marie

Curie, CAFOD, The Good Shepherd Collection and various other local charities. Through active participation in all aspects of school life pupils evaluate the Catholic life and mission of the school by expressing their views through the school and class councils. There are very good links with the community, in particular, the parish. Members of staff lead the parish Children's Liturgy at two Masses. There is a monthly Sunday Mass in church led by the school.

There is effective use of blogs as a tool for each class to share locally, nationally and internationally what they are learning in RE and the life and work of the school. They use the Life Channel as a means to communicate with the school community showing assemblies, visits and work. The school weekly newsletter also reaches the parish. Pupils willingly give of their time within the community. They play an active role both in school and in the wider community, as play partners, prefects, Sacramental partners, class councils and the school council which is part of the Acocks Green forum. In the parish pupils read at Mass, are altar servers and support the Christmas Bazaar and the Day of Prayer.

Pupils' participation in worship is exemplary with pupils able to lead using formal and informal prayers, dramatisations, pictures, thoughts, the making of artefacts and sharing views and opinions. The pupils' response to collective worship both during the assembly and the Mass was excellent. At the Mass in church during the inspection pupils were attentive, showed an exemplary level of reverence and responded well to the questions posed by the priest. They made the responses in the Mass clearly and all sang with enthusiasm. There was a large number of altar servers. This was a joyous prayerful occasion. Pupils are able to take an active role planning and participating in collective worship. All pupils who took an active part showed a great deal of maturity. The school, with the priest, involve the parents in the sacramental preparation. Prayer is an important part of the school day. It is seen as an integral part of the RE lesson. Pupils are able to take home Prayer Bags to help them pray with their families. This initiative is planned for further development. There are many opportunities for pupils to pray together in school but there is no place dedicated for quiet individual prayer. Members of the parish Legion of Mary come regularly to say the Rosary with volunteer groups of pupils. Each class in turn joins the parish for the Friday parish Mass. Personal development is significantly impacted upon the pupils through the excellent care and guidance they receive.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

The leadership of the Catholic life by the headteacher, the subject leader and the senior leadership team is outstanding. Together with the parish priest they are key to the development of the Catholic life. The governing body has regular contact with the school and with the staff are dedicated to improving outcomes for pupils. They have regular feed back on all activities supporting the Catholic life of the pupils

This is unmistakably a Catholic school. At the heart of school life are the regular liturgical celebrations and daily acts of collective worship. Living the faith is the backbone to all they do in the school. There is continuous informal monitoring of the Catholic life as well as the formal monitoring both by the staff and governors. There is the desire to improve provision further. Staff lead by example and are excellent role models for the pupils. Catholic values and beliefs are lived out in the daily life of the school. The school provides a positive environment and motivates pupils to work to the best of their ability. This is an inclusive school where pupils are known and they understand that they are appreciated and will be treated equally. Governors promote inclusive practice.

The leadership of RE is outstanding. The experienced, knowledgeable subject leader knows the school well, and encourages and supports teachers. She is enthusiastic for her subject and has the desire for further improvement. With the priest she sets a clear plan for the year for the activities relating to religious education and the Catholic life. As the deputy headteacher she is in an ideal position to gain a strategic overview of RE throughout the school. She is a partner in the outstanding leadership of the Catholic life, observes RE lessons and takes learning walks with a

specific target in mind. She completes book trawls. She ensures the correct coverage of the diocesan *Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education*. The improvements in RE have enabled the subject leader to have a sharper focus on the monitoring and self evaluation in RE.

The school and priest work in partnership to improve the Catholic life. When parents first bring their child to the Reception class they are invited to be part of the Catholic life of the school with a special Mass for the parents of the Reception children. Parents are involved in the sacramental preparation of their children. As part of the sacramental preparation pupils benefit from a day visit in Year 3 to Alton Castle before they receive their First Communion and a residential visit to Alton Castle at the start of Year 6 as part of the preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation. Year 6 develop the notion of service in their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Visits to Harvington Hall and St Chad's Cathedral further enhance learning. During the visit to Harvington Hall the priest says Mass for the pupils. At St Chad's pupils prepare the liturgy for the day.

The school makes excellent provision for community cohesion. Pupils work and play harmoniously together. The school has a parent partnership worker who further supports the outstanding links with parents. The school looks outward to the community. The school is totally integrated in the parish life. They are very active members of the parish community. The school hosts citizenship forums. There are extensive links with the local community with plans to develop these further. Closer links with a local special school are planned. Pupils enjoy socialising with and gaining learning experiences with pupils from other schools. Collaboration with other Catholic schools is very good. There are long established very good links with the nearby Catholic High School. There is evidence of successful work of the school reaching out beyond the school. Pupils have a developing knowledge of the global dimension of the Church. Learning about other religions comes in a month of activities linked to learning about different faiths.

The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

The quality of teaching is good. No teaching less than good was seen with some outstanding practice. The judgement was made from the teaching seen, the quality and breadth of the evidence in pupils' books and in discussion with pupils. Planning is very good and based on the *Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education* but adapted to meet the needs of the school. The school follows the diocesan sex and relationship programme, *All that I am*. Planning is able to respond to the differing abilities of the pupils through the high quality of the assessments. Pupils are involved in the evaluation of their learning. Teachers employ a good range of teaching styles and activities to engage learners and provide a level of work that matches pupils' needs. Teaching assistants' very good support enables the pupils to work in small groups for the main activity and accelerate their learning. Four Polish speakers support the large number of Polish pupils in the school. Written work generally matches pupils' needs. Marking has been a focus for improvement. There is now a greater consistency of marking across the school, with fewer inconsistencies where improvement is still necessary. Pupils' work both collaboratively and independently. There are good links between RE and other subjects, in particular literacy, music, drama, history and art with a set of Stations of the Cross, though these links are not formalised. Pupils' work in RE helps them to reflect on other faiths. The curriculum is rich and full. The school is working to make the curriculum more cohesive. Resources are good and are mainly class based. RE is funded as the other core subjects with help being given to support the visits. The church is used by the teachers as an excellent resource for learning. The homework diary has a weekly Gospel page. The leadership ensures that the school provides the best quality of Catholic education within the context of supporting families in passing on the Catholic faith to their children.

Provision for collective worship is an area of excellence. Pupils have a very good knowledge of the traditional prayers of the Church. The senior management are not complacent and look for ways to develop it further. Each class has a prayer focus. There is focused prayer in Advent, Lent, October and May. Penitential services take place during the year. Activities linked to the Liturgical Year are encouraged for example making an Easter Garden and Easter Bonnets. Collective worship plays a major role in contributing to pupils' excellent spiritual and moral development.