



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

SS PETER AND PAUL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL LICHFIELD

Inspection dates 3-4th November 2011
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary and Nursery
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mgr Michael Sharkey
School address	Dimbles Hill Lichfield Staffs WS13 7NH
Telephone number	01543 510748
E-mail address	headteacher@st-peter-st-paul.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	July 2009
DFE School Number	860/3484
Unique Reference Number	124375

Headteacher Miss Teresa Cotter

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 4 religious education (RE) part lessons to observe teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. He observed the school's work, including assemblies, 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

SS Peter and Paul is a smaller than average primary school with 100 pupils on roll, of whom 45% are baptised Catholic. It serves the parishes of SS Peter and Paul and Holy Cross with another Catholic primary school and draws children mainly from the local housing estates within an area of mixed and often significant socio economic challenge. The majority of pupils come from a White British background with 10% from the Polish and Latvian communities. The percentage of children with special needs is above the national average. The school experiences a high level of mobility, which inevitably impacts on achievement and attainment, as well as the budget. Results from base line assessment on entry indicate poor prior religious knowledge and experience. The headteacher is also the RE co-ordinator.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

SS Peter and Paul school provides an outstanding Catholic education for all its pupils, in the face of daunting difficulties, which include high levels of pupil mobility (130% in Year 6 2010-2011), budgetary restraints, and a high proportion of vulnerable and needy children. It meets these challenges with an all-encompassing welcome into a strong and vibrant Catholic ethos, together with very effective learning strategies which are tailored to the needs of each individual pupil. The school's mission statement provides a distinctive Catholic identity and purpose. Provision for collective worship is excellent as is the pupil response to the many opportunities for prayer and reflection. Outcomes from the religious education programme are exceptional throughout the school, with provision having particularly strong impact in Key Stage 1, so that by the end of Year 6 attainment levels are above expectation and high for those who have been in the school since Reception. This is the result of outstanding teaching and an enriching, well-planned creative curriculum. Staff morale and commitment is very high and senior leadership together with the governing body are as one in their total determination to provide the very best education for all the pupils. The spiritual life of the pupils is diligently nurtured and developed in a clearly enunciated, distinctive Catholic atmosphere, where the message of the Gospels is lived and celebrated. The religious education programme makes no small contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The school reaches out very effectively to the local community and beyond.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. Rated a very good school at the last inspection it has gone from strength to strength thanks to strong, effective leadership, which knows how to communicate vision very effectively, ensure good quality teaching, and clear, objective planning for the future. The areas for development raised at the last inspection have been effectively addressed: these included the developmental aspect of the marking of pupils' work and the ongoing effort to ensure consistency and challenge across the school in pupils' work. The impact of strategies put in place has resulted in a significant improvement in the formative quality of the marking of written work. Religious education and Catholic life are closely monitored through well-embedded procedures, which include specific in-service education and subject reviews and reports. A major visit of the school's aims is planned to start imminently. The school knows itself well and plans both effectively and sets targets which are clearly measurable in terms of relevance and impact.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of others' faith and beliefs and how these relate to the Catholic Faith.
- Encourage and exercise all pupils' skills in independently planning and leading collective worship

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment are above expectation and, given that pupils enter the school with poor levels of prior knowledge and religious experience, this represents excellent achievement and progress over time. The majority have made accelerated gains of 3 or 4 levels, particularly in reaching the attainment targets of learning from religion. The quality of learning and progress for pupils with special educational needs is excellent, because assessment and tracking identifies tasks and strategies which are well pitched to meet their learning needs and teaching assistants are able to provide proactive support in smaller groupings. For example, the growing number of Polish and Latvian children, and their parents, benefit immensely from the excellent support of a bilingual volunteer teacher with quite remarkable results. From Reception through Key Stage 1 particularly, pupils make very rapid progress in coming to understand the significance and special-ness of prayer, grasping a basic knowledge and understanding of the stories in the Gospels and the first ideas of symbolism and Sacrament. By the end of Year 6 pupils have a well internalised knowledge and understanding of the Faith and are able to speak about its relevance to their own lives. They are very secure in understanding the meaning behind the parables and the teachings of Jesus. They are less confident, however, in discussing or making links with other faiths and viewpoints. In their written work they demonstrate their growth in spirituality, reflecting on what they have learnt and composing their own personal prayers

All pupils benefit from the vibrant Catholic life of the school and make an excellent contribution to it, not least in their joyful attitude and caring behaviour. This was evident, for instance, in the Awards assembly where different individuals each week were presented to the whole school as being particularly kind or helpful in school, and exemplifying its values and mission. Such powerful role modelling extends also to the everyday contribution older pupils make in being playground companions or prayer buddies to the younger children. As part of their Confirmation preparation Year 6 pupils researched the lives of the saints and have dedicated various areas of the school to their patronage. Pupils take leading roles within circle time with confidence. Charity fundraising is a key feature of the year and enables pupils to exercise their feelings of empathy and generosity. They are very appreciative of what the school is offering them but also feel that they are partners in their own education and can make their voices heard particularly through the school council.

Pupils' response to, and participation in, collective worship is joyful and wholehearted, celebrating well-planned liturgies. The whole school Mass celebrated during the inspection in the adjoining parish church was a prayerful and uplifting experience, with music, clear confident reading with meaning, and the active participation of a large number of the pupils at every stage of the celebration. The acting out of the parables of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coins was excellently effective. A memorable example from the last Holy Week celebration was the Year 5 and Year 6 individual pupils leading the Stations of the Cross around the school with parents, staff and governors present. All pupils are able to develop to a certain extent the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgy in assemblies and participate in celebrating the Eucharist, but would benefit from more opportunities for independent ownership of their liturgy planning. The school itself has recognised this need for greater pupil autonomy. Their reverent demeanour at prayer is quite natural, and their belief in the power of prayer is evident in the many beautiful prayers composed by individuals and used in their classrooms. The priest is an always available and supportive figure in the celebration of the Mass and the Sacraments, and a welcomed presence in the school and classroom.

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

The Catholic life of the school is promoted very effectively by the excellent leadership of the headteacher and her senior team, as well as an enthusiastic and highly motivated staff. They plan realistically and review continually its impact on both staff and pupils. There are clear procedures in terms of feedback from parents and pupils shaping the development plan and regular reports to the governing body on the school's ethos and religious education. The distinctive nature of a Catholic school is developed through regular inset for staff which emphasises spiritual development and the distinctive nature of a Catholic school. A whole school revisit of the mission statement is planned for this year and will involve all members of the school community. The pupils already know and understand the mission of the school because it is prominent on every surface and wall, prayer and lesson. Collective worship is monitored, with close liaison between governors and senior leadership to ensure a good provision for assemblies and liturgies. A spiritual audit has been carried out and this successfully prompted discussion and sharpened focus on improving the quality of Catholic life and spirituality. The success of leadership and management is seen in the pupils' outstanding behaviour and real care for others and their very good relationships with peers and staff.

The governing body provides very effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school. They are a challenging body with knowledgeable expertise who have, together with the headteacher, successfully steered the school to its present excellence. They meet all statutory and canonical requirements fully, such as those pertaining to curriculum and time allocated to religious education. They visit the school frequently, scrutinise RE reports carefully, and set challenging and focused performance management targets for the subject. The present chair of governors is also the parish priest and a very frequent visitor, liaising closely with the headteacher, and a supportive and effective animator in steering the governing body. As a consequence the governing body is very well informed about Catholic life and aspects of RE which enables them to monitor and challenge more effectively.

The leadership and management of RE is excellent because there is great attention to detail in every aspect of the subject. The process of establishing more effective tracking of progress and achievement, as well as levels of attainment, is being successfully embedded, while the school recognises the need for further work in using data to inform teaching. Priorities are clearly laid out and planned for, and lesson observations and book trawls are resulting in best practice being shared through a united focus on an aspect such as questioning, or more challenging lesson objectives. All teaching staff have an RE performance management objective with frequent reviews presented to the governors. The level of self evaluation and the analysis of results at both stages informs planning and objectives; this focus has resulted in areas previously noted for development being wholly transformed.

The school is an outstanding example of community cohesion. Despite the high levels of mobility leading to often short stays, the school is willing to welcome weak and often needy children, including those troubled and troublesome, into its family, living out its mission to be Christ to others. Leadership provides and encourages opportunities for a variety of links with the home, parish and the wider community. Inspire Workshops and energetic engagement with parents and carers, especially from other language communities, is a real strength. The school has an inclusive, open door policy, which encourages those not used to the academic environment to feel relaxed and able to participate more immediately, and marks an open, inviting community and a generous outreach to the local and global community. Pupils of other denominations or faiths feel that they are able to express their beliefs comfortably, feel included, and join in every aspect of the school's life. There are strong links with the Catholic schools cluster and local schools, in particular the nearby Rocklands special school some of whose Catholic children have participated in the school and parish sacramental preparation programme, as well as other activities. This link has been hugely beneficial to the pupils of both schools. Pupils are also active in the local community giving their time to sing for the local elderly and distribute harvest boxes. They generously support global

charities such as CAFOD. The beliefs and customs of other major faiths are touched on in the curriculum but to no great depth or impact. Initial links with a multi ethnic school in Birmingham have been established, an exciting new school development, and this will provide more frequent and memorable opportunities to meet up and engage with pupils from other backgrounds. This follows on from the very positive experience of a recent day visit to places of worship in Derby and meets the need identified by the school itself.

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

The quality of teaching is excellent, invariably good, with outstanding practice observed during inspection especially in the lower end of the school. The growing development of independent learning and thinking skills is making a real impact on learning and progress in the upper school. The teachers have a secure subject knowledge and plan lessons well, with a variety of activities such as role play and relevant use of video clips. The marking of pupils' work is generally both helpful and challenging. Teaching in the best lessons encourages the pupils to think for themselves, encourage peer learning and assessment, and the more able certainly benefit from more demanding opportunities. Where the teacher's questioning is challenging and searching, the response from pupils indicates real intellectual effort. Where teaching is less creative and imaginative on the odd occasion, it is the result of a too inflexible adherence to the lesson plan. Teaching assistants prove invaluable in meeting the learning needs of pupils in smaller ability groups very effectively, because they are part of the planning and are well briefed as to their role.

The excellent assessment for learning through the tracking of individual pupil progress is having a significant impact on lesson planning to meet the different learning needs of the pupils and this is successfully embedded. Because of the relatively small numbers in the school there is an almost one to one approach to teaching and learning which is a tremendous aid to pupils' progress. The scrutiny of written work indicates that formative marking is a great tool to ensuring steady improvement over time, and sets up a dialogue between teacher and pupil, which both encourages and challenges. This good practice is spread throughout the school and consistently practised by all teachers.

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils fully. Curriculum Directory and diocesan requirements are met. Relationship education is dealt with sensitively and clearly, consistent with the teaching of the Church. The school is working with its sister parish school to develop a coherent, shared approach to this important aspect, which will meet the needs of their particular local situations. Teaching about other faiths is included in the curriculum, and work on themed days and Around the World Weeks has impact, but pupils would benefit from a little deeper study to help them understand and have a conversation about similarities and differences between the world's major religions. The outstanding creative curriculum promotes at all times the pupils' awareness of the needs of others in society. Resources are well managed, ICT is used very effectively as a teaching aid, and prominent and colourful displays on walls create a visual, daily reminder of the distinctive character of a Catholic school.

Provision for collective worship is excellent, with many opportunities for spiritual nourishment through prayers, prayer bags and assemblies, retreats, and times of stillness and reflection in lessons. Masses are celebrated frequently in the adjoining parish church and the sacramental preparation programmes are well planned. The new liturgy responses in the Mass are being taught effectively to the pupils. The liturgical season is well marked and celebrated, particularly Advent, Lent and Holy Week, with drama and presentations such as those for the Stations of the Cross. Older pupils have the opportunity to go on retreat which they look forward to and use well.