

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 100168

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Primary School
145 Charlton Road
London
SE7 7EZ

Chair of Governors
Headteacher
Inspectors

Mrs Sharon Sales
Mr Sean Small
Mr Stephen Beck
Mrs Penny Rickard

Inspection dates 23rd May 2012

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Introduction

Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Greenwich Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Greenwich LEA. The principal parish which the school serves is Our Lady of Grace Charlton. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 98%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 9% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 206 making it a smaller than average primary school. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is average. Around 18% of the pupils receive extra support in class. About 66% of the pupils are from a minority ethnic background, with the majority of these from an African heritage. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above average although few are at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

Our Lady of Grace is an outstanding and highly effective school. It is committed to achieving excellence in spiritual, social and academic education and lives out its Mission Statement which says, *'Our Lady of Grace School is a community based on Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church which aims to develop each person spiritually, intellectually, physically, culturally and socially.'* This is endorsed by parents who commented on their questionnaire returns, *'I would like to express my gratitude for a Christ centred, high standard, quality education being provided for my children'* and another who stated *'RE at the school is excellent, my child is gaining a deeper understanding of Catholicism'*.

The key to the school's success is the strength of the leadership and management which has formed a clarity of vision for the school's future. It has in turn secured a very welcoming atmosphere which is positive, caring and supportive, demonstrating an openness to other faiths and cultures. There is a strong emphasis on inclusion and keenness to develop pupils' awareness of community through an understanding of the various communities to which they contribute. A dedicated headteacher encourages staff and pupils to fulfil their personal potential.

All members of the school community have considerable pride in their school with pupils having a strong sense of belonging. They are well cared for and listened to, as reflected in the views of the school council with pupils from differing backgrounds working and playing harmoniously together giving each other support where needed. The school reflects its Catholic ethos in the very good, caring and professional relationships that exist between adults and pupils explicitly based on Gospel values. The questionnaires sent to parents produced a good response of 31%, of which a 100% were overwhelmingly positive and confirmed parents are pleased with the care, guidance and education their children receive. The school has addressed well the areas identified in the last inspection as in need of development and this has impacted on the school's effectiveness. The inspectors have been able to validate the school's clear self evaluation of its current strengths and areas for development which marks out its clear capacity to improve and to go from strength to strength. This capacity is supported by the team approach adopted that sees the religious education coordinator working together with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to maintain direction for the curriculum area, sustain progress and secure succession. The relatively new Parish Priest is very enthusiastic and supportive of the school both in his role of offering chaplaincy to the school and as a prospective school governor. The governing body as a whole operates very effectively to fulfil and discharge its responsibilities to the school and wider community.

Grade 1

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

There are no significant areas for improvement. The school should continue to maintain and build on its current numerous strengths by;

- considering the inclusion of a specific section on the school's website to more widely celebrate its religious education curriculum and programme of liturgies
- continue to use its rigorous self evaluation and assessment procedures to secure further improvement
- continue to build on the current very good parish links
- governors' could consider establishing greater clarity for parents in regard to a whole school cross curricular policy for Education for Personal Relationships including sex education with reference to the Diocesan Policy for Education in Human Love.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

Grade 1

The headteacher, supported by his deputy and the religious education coordinator, has admirably secured a school environment that is supportive of all involved with a shared vision that sees all valued within the school community in addition to creating an understanding of the concept of helping one's neighbour in the widest sense. There is a shared sense of mission that sees strong collegiate working to ensure the Catholic ethos is maintained and further developed.

The Mission statement is given prominence in all aspects of school life and serves as both a guide and reminder to all of what the school sees itself to be about. A change in Parish Priest has seen a reinvigoration of the strong belief held across the school community of the value of the home, school, parish partnership and these links are strengthening.

The school has a good website that could be further utilised to highlight the religious curriculum and spiritual dimension of school life. The governors know their school well through strong involvement and interest in developments in the school. They have confidence in the management team which produces a true management partnership that supports the effectiveness of the school.

There is a strong commitment to move the school forward, whilst maintaining and developing its Catholic ethos. They could usefully consider ways in which they can be proactive in their role as a 'critical friend' in relation to religious education.

Pupils' views are given a voice through the active school council. The achievements of pupils are recognised, encouraged and celebrated.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

Grade 1

The school more than fulfils its statutory obligations with regard to collective worship. Prayer and worship are described by the school as central to the day to day life of the school and all aspects of the curriculum. This is potently clear through the opportunities pupils are given for daily prayer, collective worship and opportunities for regular reflection. A range of experiences are provided through whole school, key stage and class assemblies. These incorporate themes related to the school's SEAL programme, religious education topics and the liturgical year. A number of school liturgies over the year provide opportunities to celebrate other significant events. In addition to these non Eucharistic celebrations, whole school, Holy Day of Obligation and special occasion Masses are celebrated. All these celebrations are enhanced by pupil involvement in both the preparation and celebration of these occasions.

Class focal points and displays around the school are of a very high order. The school operates in an old building of which maximum use has been made of restricted space. Classrooms are colourful and provide a stimulating learning environment for pupils. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. As one parent wrote, *'The religious education at the school is very effective. My child has a strong sense of what is 'right and wrong'.* The pupils are active in maintaining a climate of mutual respect and understand the notion of accepting responsibility for their own actions. They demonstrate a love of their faith commensurate with their age.

An assembly attended, led by year six pupils, engaged the whole school. Pupils spoke out very well and created a reverent, reflective environment that presented the message of Pentecost in a way that made it accessible to all present. The assembly was enhanced by pupils singing, the building of a focal point at the start of the assembly and the use of lighted candles. Messages distributed on cut out flowers provided another thought provoking dimension to the assembly.

Excellent reflections witnessed at the start of some lessons provide exemplars that could usefully be more widely shared. Whilst at present these tend to be teacher led, opportunities exist to enable pupils to start taking a lead role in these prayerful starts to lessons.

Community Cohesion

Grade 1

The school's aim is for its Mission Statement to show that each person is appreciated, created and loved by God, respects their individual worth, and values their unique contribution. This is exemplified in all the school does. School policies and practices including Admissions, Accessibility, Disability

Equality Schemes and recruitment, set an aim to promote Community Cohesion.

The school values each child as an individual and encourages celebration of difference. Pupils are encouraged to live as God's family where all differences of race and culture are embraced, respected and valued. They celebrate an International Cultural day where the pupils come to school dressed in their traditional costumes and share food from different cultures. The school actively celebrates Black History Month, and celebrates the languages of pupils with a 'Language of the Month' board.

The school is a welcoming community and tries to model a community that is based on Gospel Values of tolerance, understanding and justice and fairness.

Community participation sees the school choir singing at Churches Together, celebrating its multi-faith community in addition to performing at Greenwich Schools Music Festival, and attending the Royal Artillery Band. There is keen participation in a range of local sporting events. The school hosts musical appreciation concerts e.g. Brazilian Drummers and African/Caribbean music and dance and have participated in a dance performances in Greenwich theatre supported by the community.

The school places great importance on relationships with parents. Parents are encouraged to volunteer in school on a regular basis. There is a parent bank of volunteers who regularly help out and join the school for out-of-school trips and excursions. Parents are kept informed about the progress of their child through a number of ways including Parent Evenings and end of year reports. Where needed parents are involved on a closer basis to work with the school to enhance behavioural or emotional issues. The school offers a counselling service which is able to provide parents with immediate access to trained and specialised counsellors. The school holds coffee mornings to signpost parents to the local services in the community. The community board also directs parents to events. Pupils have been successful in initiating changes in school, such as improving the use of the school garden, designing and distributing a Christmas newsletter and meeting visitors to the school. The school took part in the 'Young Enterprise programme' where each class spent a day working on topics including, Our Community, Our City, Our World and Our families. The school collaborates with local Catholic schools, sharing good practice and the Fraternal Cross. All staff and children are included in the liturgical life of the school where they learn to appreciate, understand and pray for other people, cultures, nations and religions, especially those who are struggling or in difficulty.

Charitable giving is extensive and includes support locally, families in need in the school, the Greenwich and Bexley Hospice, Children In Need, CAFOD. 'love in a box' collection at Christmas and fundraising for a school in Uganda, a relationship which is ongoing. In each case the learning and discussion around the particular issue come first. Pupils know and understand why they are taking part and have empathy. One pupil described charities as the "Apostles of the modern day".

This is in addition to the school's religious education programme and focus on other faiths. Whilst learning about Islam, an Imam from the Local Mosque was invited to speak in order to deepen understanding of this faith. Guest speakers from the Jewish community support understanding of similarities between the Catholic faith and others.

Many of the pupils attend local groups outside the school including; Cubs, sport, music and dance clubs. Links with other local Catholic and non Catholic schools are strong and of mutual benefit. This is evident through shared INSETs, informal support networks, regular Head Teacher and R.E. Co-ordinator meetings and Cluster networks.

Religious education

Achievement and standards in religious education

Grade 1

Pupils start school at a generally appropriate age related level and they make very good progress throughout their time at Our Lady of Grace. At the end of Key Stage 2 achievement and standards are at least in line with expectations and frequently above. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and this reflects the well targeted support provided for them. The discreet and effective manner in which teaching assistants support pupils is particularly commendable. Expectations in religious education are very high and never less than those in other subjects. Pupil workbooks are well presented and they identify them as special. Progress is well supported by very good teacher expertise in the use of open ended questioning and pupils are enthusiastic about sharing ideas and participating in discussion. They also exhibit the ability to apply their learning to their own lives in part due to the strong role models staff provide. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary and reflects the high level of respect they have for each other and their working environment. This is equally true outside of the classroom environment. Pupils operate in a very caring and supportive educational environment that encourages self confidence and the ability to actively participate in learning. As one pupil commented, *"We don't need rules because we know the standards expected of each other which comes from Jesus who told us to love one another"*. They work very effectively, independently, in pairs and in groups and examples were seen of extremely effective 'hot seating'. Pupils are able to readily switch between these learning approaches. They are generally very articulate with one pupil reflecting; 'The Holy Spirit gives us confidence and courage'. Assessment data reflects the progress made by pupils with high numbers gaining Level 5.

Teaching and learning in religious education

Grade 1

Teachers set high expectations of pupils to which they generally rise. In lessons observed teaching was never less than good and there were elements of very good and outstanding teaching in all lessons observed.

Classroom management is of a high order and promotes a calm working environment. Lessons are well structured and planned with learning objectives shared with pupils and revisited during lessons. Teachers pace lessons well and use a variety of strategies to engage pupils and stimulate their interest. Good evidence was seen of interactive and reflective marking which is used to inform teachers future planning. Pupils are beginning to self evaluate their understanding of each topic covered and this could usefully be embedded across the school. Assessment of each topic is undertaken on a termly basis using the sublevel descriptions produced by the Diocese; evidenced by written work produced, oral contributions and the pupil's attitude and approach. These sub-levels are recorded on tracking sheets to monitor progress throughout the year. Each class maintains a religious education assessment and work samples folder.

Parents are informed of topics at the beginning of term and are given guidance on how they can support their child along with end of year reports detailing progress made.

In all lessons observed clear links were established with the pupils day to day lives. This contextualisation greatly enhanced both understanding and learning. In teaching about the Holy Spirit teachers used a range of symbolism to deepen understanding for example through references to the Olympic Torch. All lessons started with a prayer with several being marked by opportunities for reflection which was provided in an unrushed way to facilitate a truly meditative experience. Music and interactive whiteboards were skilfully employed within lessons. Teachers employed excellent questioning skills, strong cross curricular links and emphasis on the development of religious education vocabulary. Pupils are able to navigate their Bibles with confidence and have clearly been well taught in this regard. In exploring the topic of feelings very good use of 'hot seating' saw opportunities used to develop a wider understanding through, for example, exploration of Mary's feelings of loss, the disciples feelings of fear and then the pupils discussion of their own feelings in differing situations. Very good use is made of classroom support with learning support assistants having an impact on learning within classes. They are well planned for, have a clear understanding of their role and operate very discreetly.

The religious education curriculum

Grade 1

The school meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education, the Diocesan policy and guidelines for Religious Education and time allocation set by the Bishops' Conference of approximately 10% of curriculum time being allocated to religious education.

Religious education is taught through 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' scheme which the school adopted in 2010. The quality of the curriculum is very good and appropriately age related. The change of scheme was fully supported by the governors, staff and parents who are very appreciative of the work that has been undertaken to develop strong continuity in religious education across the school.

The curriculum builds on prior attainment and teachers endeavour to make it relevant to the experience and life of pupils. Pupils with additional needs and those not fluent in English are very well supported by teaching assistants who work skilfully, sensitively and discreetly to ensure all pupils have access to the curriculum and make good progress.

Whilst there was significant evidence of differentiated tasks in lessons seen, much of the work in pupils' books reflected differentiation by outcome and could now be expanded to reflect the task differentiation provided. Good evidence was seen of cross curricular links being employed to enhance religious education teaching particularly through, literacy, drama and art which it would now be appropriate to make more explicit.

The teaching of Religious Education is explicitly valued by the headteacher and Governors in relation to subject staffing, inset, accommodation, timetabling and budget.

Parents feel well supported with their children's religious education and as a result feel able to support them at home although they would welcome more information in regards to the school's Education for Personal Relationships policy and the approach taken to sex education.

Leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1

The excellent religious education coordinator has been in post for three years. Leadership of the subject is of a very high standard. There is a shared approach, with the headteacher and deputy headteacher supporting and helping to oversee developments in this area. This team based approach to religious education ensures the subject is given an appropriate status at senior management level. The coordinator has a well defined monitoring role which includes programmes of classroom observations, supervision and monitoring of planning, scrutiny of pupils' work and support for staff.

Staff demonstrate very good subject knowledge and a strong commitment to the school's religious education scheme. A good programme of staff training, staff meetings and support for all, mean staff are confident and empowered to deliver the religious education curriculum. The staff team works well together to create an exciting learning environment that impacts very positively on the educational and spiritual experiences offered to pupils.