

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report



St Joan of Arc

Northolme Road, Highbury Park, London N5 2UX

Date of inspection: 6th March 2015

A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade 2

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy is good. The programmes of study comprehensively cover and deliver the content of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. Measured against the levels of attainment the school delivers very good outcomes for its pupils' growth in knowledge and understanding in religious education. The quality of teaching is good, with the pupils engaged in their learning and encouraged by the high expectations of teachers. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education is very good, with thorough in-service of teachers in place to meet the needs they have to deliver the new units of the composite religious education programme. The school needs to consolidate its assessment and moderation procedures and to develop further its partnership with the pupils enabling them to know more precisely how to move to next level in their progress in religious education.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade 1

The overall effectiveness of the school's Catholic life in developing pupils' experience of richness of the Catholic way of living and believing is outstanding. The school has fully followed up and completed the recommendations of the previous inspection regarding displays, school garden and the development of its own hymn book. Religious education is at the core of the curriculum that is delivered to the pupils in the life and teaching of the school. The accommodation, staffing and resources made available to the subject are generous and the focus on in-service for the delivery of the Catholic life is made effective in the provision of designated time. The experience of prayer in the course of each day, the well prepared assemblies, and the creative engagement by the pupils in their worship through singing together so harmoniously, result in a school which celebrates its beliefs in Jesus Christ with great effect. The commitment and contribution to serving others and pursuing the Common Good is embedded in the culture of the school and the pupils are articulate in explaining why collecting for the poor is answering the teaching of Jesus. The partnership with the parents, the three parishes, especially the one adjacent to the school, and other schools is solid. The school is particularly generous and involved in its support of deanery and Diocesan initiatives. This arises from the effective leadership of the Governors and leadership team in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent 1 day in school, visited 15 lessons and 1 assembly, and carried out 6 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Joan of Arc, Islington was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

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|----------------------|---------------------|
| Deacon Anthony Clark | Lead Inspector |
| Miss Nikki Kane | Associate Inspector |
| Mrs Amanda Crowley | Associate Inspector |

Description of School

This Voluntary Aided, school is a two form entry in the LA of area and the locality of Islington. The school serves the parishes of St Joan of Arc, Highbury, St Thomas More, Manor House, and Our Lady of Good Counsel, Stoke Newington. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 96%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 4% and from other Faiths 0%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 56%.

There are 441 pupils on roll, with 2 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHC). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average. There is an above average rate of families claiming free school meals. Eighty eight pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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|-------------|----------|
| DFE Number: | 206/3631 |
| URN Number: | 100449 |

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|---------------------|----------------------|
| Headteacher: | Miss Claire Campbell |
| Chair of Governors: | Mrs Beccy Mackinney |

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| Date of previous inspection: | 1 st July 2009 |
| Previous Inspection grades: | 1. |

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| Key for inspection grades: | <i>Grade 1</i> | <i>Outstanding</i> |
| | <i>Grade 2</i> | <i>Good</i> |
| | <i>Grade 3</i> | <i>Requires improvement</i> |
| | <i>Grade 4</i> | <i>Causing Concern</i> |

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

The last inspection recommended continuing to develop assessment in religious education to match other core subjects and introduce targets. It also recommended the development of differentiation to provide extension opportunities for the more able. The school has successfully embedded assessment in religious education and has introduced targets. The development of differentiation to provide extension opportunities for the more able was regularly seen in both lesson plans and classes observed and has been successfully developed.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 1

The content of classroom religious education comprehensively meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The school has utilised very fully the schemes of work developed by the Westminster Diocese consultant for religious education, Dr Margaret Carswell, ensuring there is substantial compliance with the structure and content of the Curriculum Directory. The school has devoted substantial inset time to introduce and take forward the topics and structures to all staff, ensuring that all teachers are abreast of them. The allocation of 10% of curriculum is securely built in to the timetable and the requirements of the Bishops' Conference are met. The expectation that the content of religious education should serve to develop the spiritual and moral life of the pupils was very significantly fulfilled in the current topic of the scheme of work, which is concerned with the Examen of St Ignatius, in the Spiritual Exercises. Pupils in many classes demonstrated how discerning the presence of God in their lives was a meaningful personal quest. Progress in religious education was thus demonstrated as the topic built on the pupils' exposure to the understanding of Scripture at their appropriate level. The topics and headings are all in place. Resources are in place to meet the needs of pupil learning. One cannot yet judge the process of revisiting of topics as some of them are still being introduced for the first time.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 2

Pupil achievement as well as attainment and progress in religious education are good. The attainment is better than in other core subjects and is closely tracked to ensure pupils make good progress. Assessment is moderated internally and externally. The proportion of pupils reaching Level Three at end of KS1 and Level Five at end of KS2 is particularly high. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who are well versed in religious language and confident users of religious vocabulary. To move to Outstanding, pupils would need to know and understand what they need to do to improve their work and be actively engaged in setting targets for their own work. This would enable them to reach higher level work. The cyclical pattern of homework is effective in helping pupils embed their knowledge and understanding of the units of work currently in hand. Parents are enabled to help the progress of their children through the newsletter which gives details of the religious education units that are being taught in any half term.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

The lessons observed and evidence in pupils' books indicate that teaching is consistently good with some examples of outstanding lessons. Teachers have high expectations, strong subject knowledge and create a positive climate for learning. The introduction of homework contributes well to pupils' learning, enabling them to make good progress and deepen their knowledge and understanding. There is evidence of some developmental feedback and teacher/pupil dialogue. However this is not of a consistently high quality to enable pupils to understand how they can improve their own work and progress to the next level. The use of ICT as an effective and integrated teaching aid is very good. There are monthly monitoring and planning meetings enabling teachers to share creatively teaching resources and ideas. Through judicious choices of class work and homework pupils are encouraged to become independent learners. Teachers employ effective styles of questioning to nudge pupils into seeing new angles and further horizons in what they are learning.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education is good with outstanding elements. The agreed vision for the teaching of religious education is comprehensively adopted at all levels in the school, with emphasis on the progress in learning on the part of the pupils and excellence in outcomes. Governors support the budget allocation for religious education, providing for resources, in-service and focus, equal to that of the other core subjects. The leadership team is unequivocal in its drive for the improvement of teaching and pupil progress. The subject leader works tirelessly to develop and maintain the approaches, content and strategies to deliver the new units of the religious education units stemming from the curriculum directory. In the course of the inspection, the confidence and knowledge displayed by the teachers in delivering the unit on the Examen of St Ignatius was evident. The continuing challenge is to develop the quality of teaching and pupil achievement to reach higher levels. In particular, the pupils need further help in knowing how to progress to the next level and attain higher order knowledge. Teachers regularly displayed skills in questioning leading to this progress. The outreach of the department in using outside consultants and full involvement in deanery and diocesan moderation is commended.

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

- Consolidate the assessment and moderation procedures leading to higher pupil achievement
- Assist pupils to engage actively in knowing their next steps in religious education.

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

The last inspection recommended the establishing a prayer/peace garden and extend religious artefacts or displays to corridors and communal rooms currently lacking these. The prayer garden has been established and is regularly used in the course of the year. The corridors and communal rooms are replete with religious artefacts and displays, especially the reception area with its outstandingly designed interactive information wall about St Joan of Arc.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade 1

The school gives 10% of curriculum time to religious education and fulfils the Bishop Conference expectation. Senior Leadership team's input into training and support for all non Catholics and newly qualified teachers indicates that religious education is at the heart of the school. The budget allocation is in line with or above other core subjects. The place and importance of religious education is evident in the school improvement plan. The RE coordinator ensures that the RE Link Governor is kept informed. The Governors and Leadership Team offer outstanding support and active guidance in developing and reviewing the place of RE in the school. Regular inset for staff from the Leadership Team ensures staff are extremely well supported in their professional development.

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

Grade 1

The experience of Catholic worship, prayer and liturgy for the whole school community is outstanding. The inspectors benefitted in witnessing the sense of prayer and worship on the part of the pupils not only from the assembly but in particular from the spontaneous sharing by the pupils of what God meant to them in different situations in the pupil involvement in the Examen unit mentioned above. The development of spirituality and prayer is a strength of the school. The participation by the pupils in the assembly delivered on world book day, both in the articulate response to questions and in the quality and devotion of their singing was of the highest order. The RE subject leader through his music and leadership draws the pupils into a higher quality of involvement and solidarity in the Catholic life of the school. The parish priest, a regular visitor to the school, is able to contribute to assemblies in the school and in the Mass and sacraments in the parish church adjacent to the school. The parish priests of all three contributing parishes are involved in celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation for children in years 4-6. The children, through diverse moments of prayer in the course of each day, are drawn into a life of prayer and celebration of their Catholic community.

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

Grade 1

The commitment and contribution of the school and pupils to the Common Good, service and social justice is excellent. In the course of the inspection day the theme of giving thanks for all that we have received and the call to share with others who have less was regularly heard in a variety of

ways. The pupils were articulate in discussion that they are called by the teaching of Jesus to share with those who are in need and that this sharing must be generous. The involvement of the school council, comprising pupil members from the full range of classes, in choosing and recommending charities and involving their fellow classmates is very effective. The outreach to others by the school choir in music festivals, sports events etc is particularly noted. Awareness of international differences is developed through the school's exchanges with its link school in Madrid. The school fosters respect for God's creation and gifts of nature and develops a sense of responsibility for caring for the natural world.

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

Grade 1

The school has developed in an outstanding manner its partnership with parents, the parish and with the diocese through its engagement and cooperation. The parents in their answers and comments to the diocesan questionnaire affirm their appreciation and involvement in the school's vision of sharing the education and growth in knowledge and faith of their children. The school has found effective channels for sharing the Catholic vision of the school and the themes of the RE topics with the parents, especially through its parent friendly website. The relationship with the contributing parishes is very positive. The Governors look to ways to make this partnership concrete, for example finding funds to release the RE subject leader with time to write lesson plans for the composite diocesan RE programme, the celebration after the deanery Mass and making the facilities of the school available for the support of religious education.

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

Grade 1

The leadership and management of the school is outstandingly effective in promoting the Catholic life of the school. The school is up front in promoting its mission statement 'The members of the community of St Joan of Arc School, by respecting each other, learn and grow in the love of Christ.' The courtesy and respect demonstrated in the course of the inspection day by pupils and staff was evident. The vision of the school to be an educational community sharing and passing on the outcomes of faith in Jesus Christ is evident. Almost half the staff of the school are non Catholic and are well incorporated into the life and values of the school. The induction programmes in hand indicate the importance given by the Governors and senior leadership team to their importance. The school's self evaluation of how effective the Catholic life of the school is being supported and underpinned is thorough and regular. The governors look to hearing what is being initiated and maintained in this aspect of the school's life. They share in the strategic leadership of the school with enthusiasm and a firmness of purpose which prevents any area of school life being left unchallenged.

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

- Continue to ensure that the induction of new staff and promoted staff is focussed on the Catholic life of the school, especially through the obtaining of the CCRS by more staff.
- Encourage the governors to make regular and continuous use of diocesan training opportunities.