



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 100623

St Helen's Catholic Primary School
Knowle Close
Brixton
SW9 0TQ

Inspection date: 5th October 2015

Chair of Governors:	Mr David Hartnett
Headteacher:	Mr Andrew Rafferty
Inspectors:	Mr Damian Fox
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Helen's Catholic Primary School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Lambeth Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Lambeth Local Authority. The principal parish the school serves is Our Lady of the Rosary, Brixton, but pupils also come from St Francis, Stockwell and St Philip and St James, Herne Hill. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 96%. Overall, the weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10.6% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from early years to age 11. Currently there are 273 pupils on roll. A decision has been taken to increase the school to two form entry (FE) when the building work is complete. It is a larger than average primary school.

The school is situated in an area of high social and economic deprivation. The deprivation indicator for the school is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly above average. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below average. The number of pupils on the special educational needs register is 26. There are 52 pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is significantly above average. 99% of pupils come from minority ethnic groups.

Date of previous inspection:

15th November 2010

Overall Grade:

2

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding
Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Requires improvement
Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

GRADE
2

St Helen's is a good school with many outstanding features. Leaders, governors and managers demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. Governors are very supportive and are actively involved in planning and delivering improvements to the Catholic life of the school and progress in standards of learning. Two governors visit the school regularly. They attend acts of worship and undertake classroom visits.

Policies and procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education. Standards are improving as a result of recent changes in leadership. One governor said that the school, "has progressed in leaps and bounds."

The behaviour of the pupils is exemplary both in the classroom and in the playground. They are proud of their backgrounds and their school. Year 6 pupils said that they would only have happy memories. Of the parental questionnaires, 100% strongly agreed/agreed that the school was a place where, "teachers care about the children."

There are excellent links with the parish. 72% of pupils attend the local parish and contribute as readers and servers. The parish priest regularly visits the school and this is something recognised and valued by pupils.

The school has addressed the recommendation from the last report regarding the teaching of other faiths. Of the other recommendations, leaders, who have been appointed since 2013, have changed the curriculum and are now addressing assessment more rigorously. The school is well placed to be outstanding.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- As the Deputy Head is also the Religious Education Coordinator, his dual role needs to be regularly reviewed as pupil numbers increase as planned.
- Continue to develop assessment procedures to ensure effective tracking of individual pupils, with particular regard to higher ability pupils.
- To develop effective and meaningful daily acts of worship.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade
2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school

The school provides many, varied opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their faith. There is great reverence in acts of worship. They value and respect each other. Pupils appreciate the level of the care they receive and they understand the value of

looking after each other. A Year 6 pupil said that a Catholic school, "gives us boundaries, we listen to God."

Pupils were able to articulate their appreciation of the effective role peer mediators play in helping solve conflicts. They have a high profile in the school. Play leaders from Year 6 help in the Key Stage 1 playground. They assist teachers in organising the play equipment and by working with younger pupils, engaging them and helping them play.

Pupils are proud of the School Council. They feel that teachers listen to them. For example, the school provided more equipment and organised their participation in the Brixton Christmas Fayre. Pupils recognise their duty to the needs of others in the local and international community. They are very happy to contribute to charities, particularly CAFOD.

They display great pride in their school. Year 6 pupils said that they would all have happy memories. Pupils recognise that teachers care for them and want them to do the best they can.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Attainment is good given the low levels on entry. Improvements have been brought about over the last two years by the new leadership in the school and their focus on raising standards. Although attainment and levels of progress are now on a par with other core subjects, both the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher acknowledge that progress needs to be developed further. Plans are in place to improve standards.

Lesson observations and discussions with pupils confirmed that pupils are happy in their lessons. They are always engaged and try hard with presentation of work. They say that their teachers provide interesting and fun lessons. Pupils know the teachers want them to succeed.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Acts of worship engage pupils' interests and inspire reverence with prayer. In the school assembly pupils were silent and attentive to the readings and prayers which were led by Year 6 pupils and the Headteacher. Pupils read clearly and led their peers in a decade of the Rosary, each Hail Mary was in a different language. They all sang the final hymn enthusiastically.

The pupils are at ease when praying. The local Priest attended the assembly and in conversation confirmed that pupils prepare acts of worship and that their participation shows a genuine desire to pray and ask questions. No one is expected to act in a manner contrary to their beliefs.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders, governors and managers demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. They ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of each pupil is given priority in school planning. A key area in the school development plan is, "To foster a knowledgeable Christian witnessing community." A Governor commented that, "you only have to come into the school to know the greater glory of God."

The Governors and the school leaders published a new document in September 2015 to deepen an understanding of the 'Catholic School'. They understand that it is both a title and a mission. Its impact is seen in the improvements in standards and in the relationships throughout the whole community. There is no Religious Education Governor link as yet. The priority has been to develop the expertise of Governors. Attendance at meetings is excellent.

A new Chair was elected in September 2014 who regularly meets with the Headteacher, visiting at least every fortnight. He acknowledges the positive impact of the Headteacher but also that leaders still need to, "continue building teaching capacity and investing in pupils."

The Headteacher's personal faith and vision have had, and are continuing to have, a positive impact on the spiritual life of the school and its caring ethos. He commented that the school is beginning to flourish. There is more cohesion among the staff who genuinely looked after each other. He said that a school is "more than league tables. Staff are always there to talk to." He has been appointed to the new Diocesan Educational Excellence Board by the Archbishop.

The school's self-evaluation reflects their pride in recent improvements brought about by the change in leadership. It is honest in recognising that, although there is greater stability, more needs to be done. The plans for promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life of the school are detailed and reflect their commitment to Catholic education. They have a clear vision for the future of the school.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

Provision of Religious Education and standards of learning has improved following a period of instability at management level in recent years. Leaders, governors and managers are fully committed to raising standards in Religious Education. They have established a detailed system of monitoring activities, self-evaluation and self-challenge.

The Deputy Head has been in the school for a year. He said that as a new Deputy, the priority had been to address standards in the core subjects. Through his leadership, Religious Education has now been established as a core subject. The Chair noted that attainment in Religious Education is, "no longer behind" other core subjects.

There is evidence of a more systematic approach to tracking. Pupils who need either support or extra challenge are quickly identified. With the Headteacher and Lead Practitioner, they are ensuring that assessment procedures are more rigorous, following on from a recommendation in the last report. Inspectors felt that the school should continue to develop these procedures. There is also a more rigorous system of lesson observations. There have been several staff meetings regarding Religious Education, particularly moderation and planning.

The Deputy Head is also the Religious Education Coordinator. He has developed systems to raise standards in Religious Education so they are on a par with other core subjects. Inspectors suggested that as the school grows with the planned increase in the roll, governors might keep this dual role under review.

Provision

Grade
2

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

Teaching is effective in motivating pupils and ensuring that they learn well. In all lessons there were well planned tasks and a lively pace. Consequently, concentration was sustained throughout lesson and real progress was made.

The Lead Practitioner is an outstanding example of giving support and challenge to all pupils, particularly higher ability pupils. Inspectors felt that the school should ensure that she continues to model her expertise.

The use of teaching assistants in most lessons was highly effective in ensuring all pupils were supported. This was particularly evident in the Reception class and the Year 6 class. Pupils confirmed that they enjoyed their lessons because of the variety of tasks and that teachers made it interesting. Pupils take pride in their work and the quality of their work is very high. Pupils are given meaningful feedback in their exercise books.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

All classes receive at least the full allocation of 10% of curriculum time for Religious Education. The programme 'Come and See', is adapted to meet the needs and experiences of pupils. It provides opportunities for discussion and reflection in lessons. There has been staff training to focus on assessment and moderation which is evident in the delivery of the curriculum in lessons and in pupils' books.

In lessons, the curriculum provides good opportunities for the moral and spiritual development of pupils. Prayers were said and the candle on the prayer table was lit. There was always a scriptural foundation to understanding how we should live as Christians.

The impact of the curriculum in a wider sense, is evident throughout the school. The main entrance gives a warm welcome to a very Catholic school. Classrooms are being refurbished and there are many religious images and displays of pupils' work throughout the school. Staff and pupils together are creating a calm, spiritual school in which the individual is valued and cared for.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

The quality of Collective Worship at St Helen's is good. Acts of worship are given a high profile in the daily life of the school. There is a well-planned programme of celebration assemblies and Masses. The liturgical calendar is followed with special acts of worship such as patron saints' feast days and the main Church celebrations.

There are two school assemblies and separate key stage assemblies, although in discussion with pupils, the key stage assemblies did not appear to be primarily acts of worship. Inspectors raised this with the Headteacher who expressed surprise but accepted that pupils' perception would be addressed.

The school assembly which inspectors attended was outstanding. It reflected the quality of worship throughout the school. This was acknowledged by pupils, staff and governors. Year 6 pupils had prepared the theme of the Rosary as it was the beginning of October.

They led the school in a decade of the Rosary saying each Hail Mary in a different language. Singing and prayers were said with reverence. All staff, including support staff and the premises officer, attended. Prayer is said in classrooms at the beginning of the day.