



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

St Francis de Sales Catholic Junior School

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DCSF Number: 309 3501

URN Number: 102143

Headteacher: Gillian Hood

Chair of Governors: Mr Urban Jacobs

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 23 April 2010
Date of previous inspection: 25 January 2006

Reporting Inspector: Mrs S Nolan

Description of School

St Francis de Sales Juniors is a larger than average mixed Catholic school now federating with the neighbouring Catholic infant school with the same saint's name. The school serves families from a wide range of neighbouring parishes but mainly from the Tottenham parish of St Francis de Sales. There are 355 children on roll and the overwhelming majority are baptised Catholics. Of the 17 full and part-time teachers, 65% (11) are Catholics and six hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) or other Catholic qualifications. The school's mission seeks to help its pupils to 'learn, teach, live the faith'.

A far higher proportion of children than that nationally has a home language other than English. Over 90% of the school population are from minority ethnic groups. The largest groups have Black African or Black Caribbean heritages. The proportion of the school population with significant barriers to learning is higher than that nationally. Of these 102 pupils, four have a statement of special educational need. Many more children than would be expected nationally are eligible for a free school meal. Attainment on entry to the Year 3 is generally just below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Francis de Sales is a good Catholic Junior School with a strongly welcoming and inclusive ethos. The governors and staff have striven through a period of turbulence to ensure that children have the very best opportunities for future success within a caring, Christ-centred community. A major strength is the way the school strives to integrate its day-to-day work with the Church's mission through the awareness of staff and pupils of 'the unseen teacher in the classrooms'. Standards overall are average with Religious Education outperforming English. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching. Checks on pupil's performance and progress in Religious Education are carried out rigorously and underachievement identified rapidly. Prayer and worship underpin the Catholic life of the school so that pupil's spiritual, moral and social development is good. Strongly developing links with the Infant School make for good progression in the religious education curriculum from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6. Pupils behave very well and show a real sense of belonging to their community. They are helped to understand the Church's global mission through their support for a number of charities, through exploring each other's traditions, and through a wide range of international links.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the school was asked to enrich teaching and learning in Religious Education by increasing the use of new technologies in the classroom. There is now much greater use of information and communication technology in lessons although the coordinator still intends to develop further imaginative resources, particularly the use of drama in Religious Education. The school's mission statement has also been simplified, as requested. It is now more succinct and is shared at all levels of the school community. There are good systems in place to assess the pupils' learning both over time and within individual lessons. The school has ensured that all teachers are familiar with the attainment levels developed by the dioceses and is working towards establishing a portfolio of pupils' work that can act as a useful resource for

staff in moderating attainment. There is a regular and established cycle of monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice. St Francis de Sales school has also made progress on a number of other fronts. The use of illustrations on the front of pupils' religious education work books has helped to raise its profile among staff and pupils. Book scrutiny is being well used to identify future training needs. Indeed, staff training is a high priority for the coordinator, and staff are actively encouraged to study for a Catholic qualification. Other key improvements include the establishment of the single governing body for the new combined school, the close working of senior staff and religious education coordinators in both schools, and the way the school strives to involve parents in the Catholic life of the school and engages them in the children's learning.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

St Francis de Sales school has demonstrated its sound capacity to improve further through its steady progress since the last inspection despite considerable turbulence in the recent past. This owes much to the commitment of its staff. Their dedication, together with that of the governors, to support the children's religious development underpins its present success. With the appointment of a substantive Catholic headteacher to the combined school, there are genuine opportunities for the good foundations laid by the acting headteacher and present senior team to flourish. They have given a high priority to enriching the Catholic life of the school and to enabling staff to benefit from ample training opportunities. The school has rightly identified that its next steps include further developing the religious education tracking system to make comparison with pupils' progress in English more effective and to use the information to inform the school development plan. Staffing structures, however, for the combined school have still to be finalised and there is, therefore, some uncertainty with regard to future planning. As a result, the capacity of the school community to improve and develop is satisfactory.

Grade 3

What the school should do to improve further

- Take forward plans to use the central tracking system on pupils' progress in Religious Education to better inform the school development plan.
- Establish fully portfolios of levelled work to support the moderation of pupils' attainment making full use of the established diocesan levels.
- Provide further training for staff to encourage the creative and imaginative use of resources in lessons.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

St Francis de Sales School is ably led and managed by the acting headteacher. Working closely with their counterparts in the Infant school, the current senior team has steered the school through some challenging times. In this, the acting headteacher and senior team are well supported by the new governing body for the combined school. Staff share a sense of collective responsibility to promote the Catholic identity of the school. They are determined to forge

excellent links with parents and to support the local parish in improving the rate of practice among its baptised Catholic population. The school is the recent recipient of the 'Leading Parent Partnership Award'. Already, enrichment activities and after-school clubs are much valued by children and their families and the governors have realistic plans to increase this involvement in the new academic year. The school has taken on board the issues raised during recent diocesan reviews and is working assiduously towards their implementation, particularly with regard to raising attainment in Religious Education.

Grade 2

The Prayer Life of the School

The Church's liturgical cycle is well integrated into the life of the school. The provision for prayer life, liturgy and collective worship is good. Pupils are involved as fully as possible in the planning of assemblies, prayer groups, liturgical events and Mass. Daily prayers in class groups and in religious education lessons are linked to the Church's calendar. The prayer tables in each classroom reflect the colours of the liturgical season. Celebrations of the Mass and other events such as the Stations of the Cross are jointly and regularly planned with the Infant school. The parish priest supports the school also in reconciliation services. In the whole-school assembly, pupils showed their understanding of the message of Jesus through their role play on St George and the Christian virtues displayed in the story. Display in classrooms and around the corridors, along with interesting resources on the prayer tables, provide children with stimuli for thought and reflection. House groups are named after the English Martyrs and every class helps maintain a display board in the corridors with a religious theme. The Good Shepherd with his sheep was a memorable image. St Francis de Sales is prominent in the school hall. There is a calm and peaceful ethos throughout the school that is reflected in the pupil's very good behaviour and consideration for others.

Grade 2

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

A real strength of the school is its determination to include all pupils and their families and to contribute as fully as possible to supporting cohesion in its local community. Pupils have good opportunities to enhance their experience of traditions other than those of their own families through the interweaving of cultural differences within the community into school life. Links with the national and international communities include projects in Ireland, Ghana, India and Australia. The impact of this work is seen in the harmonious relationships among pupils within the school. The school has particularly strong links with the Congolese Association, working collaboratively to support the needs of pupils and their families. Parents are encouraged to visit the local parish Church and share liturgical events with the pupils and the governors. Pupils also begin to study other faiths such as Judaism and are regularly involved in a Holocaust Memorial Service. Links with the parish are good so that parents as well as pupils can learn from each other the traditions of the many groups that make up St Francis de Sales School. Pupils, through the school's charities, grow in their understanding of life in other parts of the world as well as at home. They have contributed, for example, to the recent Haitian appeal as well as being involved in local events with the Haringey Regeneration Team.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Although academic attainment is average, other outcomes are better because of the strong Catholic ethos. The pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good as is pupil's behaviour. The achievements and standards in Religious Education are sound and outstrip those of English. Pupils make good progress in Religious Education by the end of Year 6. In discussion, and in their workbooks, pupils show a growing awareness of Catholic faith. Pupil's assessment books demonstrate a satisfactory standard with children of all abilities engaging steadily in learning. Key vocabulary is very well promoted. Pupils in Year 5, for example, were well able to explore how to spread the message of Jesus, basing their work on scriptural passages. Progression in understanding aspects of the Mass and traditional Catholic prayers is good because of the carefully constructed curriculum. Pupils, at their own levels, know the pattern of the liturgical year, are gaining familiarity with rituals, and are clear as to what is expected within this Catholic community.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons because of the many and varied activities they experience. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent and contribute greatly to their obvious keenness to learn. The use of new technologies and a range of other resources were strengths of the lessons seen during the inspection. Teachers, including those who are not Catholics, have a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith and lessons are well planned to ensure that pupils really understand what they should know by the end of a session. There are good opportunities for children to learn to reflect on their own progress. Questioning is well targeted. This, together with a classroom ethos that encourages queries and explanations, supports pupil's language and communication skills. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on the theme of messages and messengers, pupils were encouraged effectively to explore their understanding of the feelings of the women at the tomb on finding it empty. Not only did they grow in their understanding of the events but also enhanced their writing skills and their vocabulary. Marking is generally encouraging and regular and teachers moderate and level children's work increasingly accurately.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The religious education department provides a rich curriculum which fully meets the Diocesan requirements with regard to curriculum time. It is well supplemented by daily prayer and worship. Schemes of work are carefully constructed to ensure progression through year groups. This is helped greatly by the themed approach as in the current work on 'Messages' running from the Nursery to Year 6. Because work is well matched to pupil's earlier learning, it contributes effectively to promoting not only their Catholic faith but also to their basic and personal skills. The close cooperation and planning with the Infant school ensures that work in religious education progresses seamlessly at the transition from Key Stage 1.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

There is very good leadership and management of Religious Education by the coordinator. Indeed, the coordinator working closely with the acting headteacher, has built energetically on the previous good foundations. She has worked very productively to help forge the links between the two schools. The quality of provision in Religious Education is a high priority in the school. Staff care deeply about the pupils' spiritual development and are very supportive of each other as they strive for the best possible delivery. Self-critical but creative monitoring and evaluation of the subject area is helping to raise attainment and prepare the pupils successfully for the next stage of their religious development. In the very well kept learning environment, the acting headteacher, working collaboratively with the coordinator, ensures that resources and staff are deployed very effectively so that all pupils are included fully in the religious life of the school.

Grade 2