



Diocese of Westminster

St. Swithun Wells

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Headteacher: Mrs. H T Andrews
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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: 27 February 2013
Date of previous inspection: 19 March 2010

Reporting Inspector: Mrs. Tina Cleugh
Associate Inspector: Mrs Joy Mowatt

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 one day in school, visited 8 lessons and an 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. Swithun Wells, in South Ruislip, was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by 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.

Description of School

The school is a one form entry, significantly over subscribed school, in the LA of Hillingdon and the locality of South Ruislip. The school serves the parish of St. Gregory the Great, South Ruislip, with some pupils from St. Thomas More, Eastcote and St. Gabriel's, South Harrow. 100% of pupils are baptised Catholics.

There are 245 pupils on roll, including Nursery, with 6 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well below average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well below average. There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Requires improvement;
Grade 4: Causing Concern.

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

Overall Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of Religious education is good. The Curriculum Directory, as the basis of the content of Religious Education, is delivered with the Diocesan units which include the important aspects of the Liturgical Cycle. These liturgical cycle aspects, woven through the planned units, illustrate the relevance provided within the curriculum, to the wide ranging needs and abilities of the pupils. Pupil attainment is good overall through challenge and high expectation of the teachers. Teaching is good overall with active engagement of most pupils. Staff are well supported by the subject leader of Religious Education, who has developed good structures. The clear vision in place, through the commitment to ongoing Continuing Professional Development, in particular the high rate of CCRS accreditation, encourages staff in their teaching of Religious Education.

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in classroom religious education?

The effective provision for prayer is now well developed, with worship evaluated through joint monitoring by the Headteacher and the subject leader of Religious Education, and with the Diocesan Advisor. The reports from the Diocesan Advisor endorse the improvement in the quality of prayer and worship offered to pupils.

The monitoring of teaching and its impact on learning is now woven into the termly cycle of evaluation including monitoring teaching, scrutiny of work in books and feedback given to class teachers. The system is robust, including the Governor "learning walks", the Headteacher and subject leader of Religious Education carrying out audits to support the termly report to the Governing Body.

Each classroom has an "RE Box", from which children choose a range of prayer books and other religious material to read. The school library allocated time includes opportunities for pupils to choose appropriate RE related books to take home to share with their family. There is a range of high quality cross-curricular work reflecting the Catholic ethos, including the wide use of ICT to enhance learning opportunities for the pupils.

The school is developing its "next steps" marking process, which empowers pupils to further develop their knowledge and understanding across the different ability levels.

To further improve classroom religious education the school should:-

- Continue to develop the recently installed "classroom monitor" electronic tracking system. for ongoing analysis and moderation, as with other core areas to raise standards of attainment
- Continue to participate in the Deanery moderation process, with an emphasis on planning for secure Level 3 in Key Stage 1 and Level 5 in Key Stage 2
- Link the quality of marking through "next steps" in learning, towards development of the higher abilities

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

Grade 1

The school has arranged a series of in-service for staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of the four themes within the Curriculum Directory. They are cross-referencing these links within their planning for greater challenge in learning. These planned links are woven within the Diocesan resource units throughout this Year of Faith. The discussion between the

subject leader of Religious Education and the inspectors identified how the teachers plan the links for the topics within the requirements of the four themes from the Curriculum Directory, including horizontal planning within the Attainment Target strands, mapped and woven through the Diocesan units.

The evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work in their books, the portfolios, the displays in classes and public areas of the school, endorse the clear links being made to the Curriculum Directory, including how it also complements the delivery of the key events within the liturgical cycle. The ongoing use of the resources developed through formulating the Diocesan Year of Faith units, has been structured into four weekly cycles of delivery, with more emphasis now on Scripture. This also includes a dedicated lesson weekly reflecting on the Gospel. These planned lessons, are proving successful in developing pupils' religious literacy. The development of the portfolios of moderated exemplars, using the school based pro-forma, is in line with work in other core areas, which is supporting the analysis of progress across the school.

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

Grade 2

The good challenge and expectations of the teachers for progress from pupils was evident during the inspection. The engagement of the pupils, the work in their books, in their portfolios, and from the newly developed "Classroom Monitor" electronic tracking system, enables the continued focus towards attaining the higher levels at the end of each key stage. The four-weekly cycle of updating the new electronic tracking, which is now being developed in a systematic way, enables the subject leader in Religious Education to monitor the rate and pace of progress. This also supports the identification of gaps in learning and understanding. There was evidence during the inspection of some high level attainment across the phases. The end of key stage one and two pupils are being guided towards achieving these higher levels, which is an ongoing priority for the school.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

During the inspection, the two inspectors observed 8 lessons, with the subject leader of Religious Education and the Headteacher. The good teaching overall, resulted in most pupils, who were actively engaged in their learning, making good progress. Good assessment procedures are being further developed. This will enable teachers to plan well and meet pupils' varying needs. Where teaching was judged as Outstanding, (1*), the pupils were pro-actively engaged. This was also evident through those lessons observed, displaying clear pace, appropriate tasks and questioning which is a scaffold enabling staff to reach all ability levels effectively. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and confidence, inspiring most pupils and contributing to their good progress. There are an above average number of non-teaching support staff to meet the needs of those pupils with additional needs. Their on-going CPD is a priority of which the school is justly proud, with some members celebrating higher level accreditation and some going forward towards initial teacher training. There was evidence during the inspection that pupils are demonstrating their developing skills, knowledge and understanding through a range of oral, illustrative and written outcomes. The teachers' feedback and pupil self-assessment against the "I Can..." statements illustrate pupils' growing ownership of their learning. This includes how they are learning about scripture, its links to exploring the Eucharist, the rituals within the Mass and how New Testament narratives reflect the everyday experiences within their Faith. The school is fully committed to developing the religious literacy of all pupils through a range of activities which celebrate the purpose of their lives, whilst reflecting spiritually on its impact on their daily lives.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The clear vision and commitment by the subject leader of Religious Education empowers the development of this key role in the educational mission of the school. Her growing systems and structures are ensuring quality religious education. She provides staff with guidance, support and encouragement. This is ongoing target, creating a shared focus, to improve teaching and its impact

on learning. Through her guidance and organisation, staff engage in peer observations, with planned opportunities for shared ideas. There is a wide range of resources available, which are of a very good quality; are varied and appropriately matched to curriculum delivery. The religious education environment, in classes, public areas and the Hall, reflect the focus of the Year of Faith. The school is currently celebrating the Season of Lent. There was a wide range of work produced by the pupils, portraying spontaneous opportunities where they are encouraged to celebrate their faith through art, prayer and reflection.

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 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: I*

The overall effectiveness of this Catholic school is outstanding. Worship and prayer are central to all aspects of the daily and termly life of the school. The excellent links with parents, parishioners and the local community have been developed well over recent years. The visionary leadership and management of the Headteacher, with her Governing Body, is outstanding. It is the hallmark of all that is successful. She inspires her colleagues and influences all aspects of their improvement agenda. The highly significant support and expertise of the Governing Body, which is evident in their high levels of contribution to the work of the school, is worthy of note. They do provide challenge to ensure effective religious education is delivered, whilst promoting the mission of the school within the community, in discharging their duties.

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school ?

The school has planned for effective prayer and worship over the termly and liturgical cycle. The knowledge and skills of the teaching staff has improved, in particular the projected high (93%) of staff with CCRS accreditation. This is delivered by the Headteacher, who holds a Masters in Catholic Leadership. The emphasis on developing the use of Scripture has been evident and observed in the confidence of the teachers to make the appropriate links within the planned units of work. The school has identified the priority for pupils to be empowered to plan for their liturgies more independently.

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

Grade I*

The leadership ensures the quality of the religious education programme, within the curriculum fully meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory, including the 10% allocation of teaching time. The financial allocation for religious education and the development the Catholic life of the school, exceeds that for other core areas. Donations of a range of attractive and valuable sculpture and art pieces enhance the learning environment and provide opportunities for pupils reflection and learning, such as those depicting the Last Supper which was evident during the inspection. The Governing Body generously allocates resources to provide high quality accommodation, which has been greatly enhanced in recent years. The high status given to developing the school accommodation, equipment, resources and general provision, provides a safe, stimulating and attractive environment for all. They continue to seek further planned development of the site and future provision for the school. Governors are also fully committed to actively raising the profile for religious education in the school.

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

Grade 1*

Prayer and worship are central to all aspects of the school. This encompasses all members of the school as well as the wider community. The richness and quality of tradition and practice, which includes active involvement of the pupils, support the wide ranging liturgical and parish celebrations. During the inspection the meeting with the Parish Priests from two of the parishes serving the school, endorsed the high quality levels achieved in the opportunities for prayer and worship. This was evident from the revival in recent years of the “May Procession,” with the increase in “traditional devotional opportunities.” The regular weekly Rosary, the bereavement “Seasons for Growth” programme are mere examples of excellent practice. The beautiful, reflective “Willow Tree Garden” with its “Welcoming Christ” statue, formally blessed and dedicated by His Grace, Archbishop Vincent Nichols, is providing an outdoor sheltered area for prayer, as a focal point in the school. The pupils were proud to share, during their interview with the inspectors, how, “as Catholics we believe in God and learn more about other faiths and our own faith”. The Altar, generously donated by the Parish, the “Liturgical Colours” display, creatively developed using priestly vestments, is reinforcing the Catholic traditions. The “Year of Faith” display, with its “key” to opening our “doors of faith” with pupil reflections, describing “what my faith means to me...” is yet another example of the commitment to developing the Catholic life of the school. The public areas of the school have a high quality range of rich and stunning art work, stimulating written work, all reflecting the Catholic ethos and mission of the school.

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

Grade 1*

The school’s commitment to the Common Good is Outstanding. The pupils clearly understand the theology which underpins their schedule of active service to those less well off than themselves. The behaviour of the pupils is exemplary, evident through their warmth, genuineness, confidence and empathy towards each other. This extends to those younger and more vulnerable in school and society, with all being fully aware of their call to serve, - even the youngest pupils - and how they seek to serve both Catholic and secular charities. They are “excellent ambassadors for the school” as described by one of the Governors, including participation in the Hillingdon Mayoral citizenship programmes.

The termly schedules of fundraising continue during the seasons of Advent and Lent. The school’s work with another Hillingdon school to support an African school, includes their recent project to collect clothing to be shipped out there, buying their jewellery to raise funds to send back to support African projects. The Parish Priest expressed his satisfaction that the “school is getting the balance right, between supporting the Catholic and secular charities, welcoming their “charitable outreach,” for example entertaining the local elderly at Christmas, their regular “coffee mornings,” providing warmth, welcome and support to their neighbours and raising needy funds for the NSPCC. There was evidence of the excellent work done to support a range of catholic charities, such as, CAFOD, and the Catholic Children’s Society and “The Passage” homeless charity.

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*

Partnership has been a driving force for the Headteacher, with her Governing Body, to develop a strong and vibrant sense of community. This is evident across the triple partnership of home, school and parish and further with the wider community. During the inspection the group of parents interviewed were very proud of what the school represents for their children, endorsed through their positive grading in the high percentage of questionnaire returned. Parents particularly appreciate the high level of knowledge and understanding their children have of their faith, “their knowledge is deep and their sincere prayers are amazing, especially during the Mass.” They

welcome the transition preparations for their children as they move to the High school, “where this school has given them a great grounding, and a good foundation to cope well in the future.”

The school is fully committed to on-going succession planning, including the Headteacher leading CCRS sessions in the school and with other Deanery schools. The growing links and pro-active partnerships, including hosting the Deanery meetings and attending celebrations at the Cathedral, accompanied by governors. The Parish Priest welcomes this “transformation over the last few years, especially the very close links with the Parish”, where the school now has “a proper presence in the parish.” The Governing Body has appointed an external consultant, who is a practising Catholic. Their links and service with and on behalf of the Diocese of Westminster is excellent.

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

Grade I*

The school is fully committed to the Church’s mission where the leadership of the school is clearly outstanding. During the inspection, there was anecdotal evidence of how the Catholic mission of the school is both its priority and its incentive, and central to all aspects of school life. The school self-evaluation coherently reflects on its known and identified areas for continued improvement and development. This also provides challenge towards excellence across all aspects, leading pupils and the school community to fullness of life. The school’s vision of discipleship reflects this, as was evident through interviews during the inspection with Governors, the Parish Priest, parents, pupils and staff. The high levels of expertise and experience are the vehicle through which the leadership and management of the school drive forward their strategies. They are well organised, thorough, demonstrating a clear understanding of their roles and responsibility. The combination of all this empowers this excellent school to live out its mission where, “the love of God is always present.”

