

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report



St. Michael's and St. Martin's Catholic Primary School

Belgrave Road, Hounslow, TW4 7AG

Date of inspection: 29 January 2016

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 is good. This is due to the passionate commitment of the newly appointed acting senior leadership team. They have a firm dedication to moving the school forward. The typicality of teaching is varied and where teaching is good the pupils are encouraged to think and reflect and benefit from creative activities. The planned curriculum is clearly linked to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, (RECD) and fully meets the 10% requirement of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Although the pupils make progress over time, it is variable. There is a lack of challenge for the more able. Pupils are well behaved in lessons, though demonstrating passive learning. The school has undergone turbulence in staffing recently and the senior leadership are in acting roles. The self-evaluation is not yet demonstrating impact on strategies implemented. This is a recognised as a key priority for action by the leadership team in partnership with the governing body. The designated governor for religious education is the school chaplain.

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 2

The school is providing vibrant and engaging opportunities for all members of the community and so the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school is very good. The school is over-subscribed and all pupils are Catholic. Pupils are taught the traditions and teachings of the Church. They are proud to discuss their faith. In particular they recently researched their response to the call from His Holiness on the Year of Mercy; they have made 'pledges' and are exploring the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Prayer and worship are integral to the daily life. The pupils are planning, preparing and leading class worship and now need to expand this to the schedule of assemblies and other liturgical celebrations, rather than reading out adult prepared readings and prayers. Relationships are very strong and adults are excellent role models to pupils. The behaviour of the pupils is exemplary. Parents value the school highly and spoke eloquently of the way the school nurtures the faith and spiritual development of their children. The governing body know and understand the school well.

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 15 lessons and 2 assemblies, 4 class acts of worship, and carried out 7 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. Martin and St. Michael, in Hounslow, 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

Mrs Tina Cleugh
Miss Liz Doonan
Mr Adam Hall
Mrs Florence Collins

Lead Inspector
Associate Inspector
Associate Inspector
Shadow Associate Inspector

Description of School

The school is a two form entry in the LA of Hounslow and the locality of Hounslow. The school serves the parishes of St Michael and St. Martin, Hounslow, St. Vincent de Paul, Osterley and Our Lady and St. Christopher, Cranford. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 100%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 0% and from other Faiths 0%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 50%.

There are 472 pupils on roll, with 8 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Thirty eight pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

Telephone: 020 8572 9658
e-mail address: office@stmichaelrc.hounslow.sch.uk

DFE Number: 313 3507
URN Number: 102531

Acting Headteacher: Mrs N Duggan
Chair of Governors: Mrs S Zerkfouai

Date of previous inspection: November 2010

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Outstanding
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 has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

The School has developed its 'Golden Books' portfolios, which contain exemplars of moderated work in religious education. This provides an opportunity for tracking progress over years and across the phases, against the agreed understandings in the levels of attainment in religious education. The marking process includes their 'wow and now' strategy for moving pupils on in the next steps in their learning. The newly developed electronic i-track system includes the recording of progress in religious education.

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

Grade 2

The content in the programme of study is linked succinctly to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The school has generously invested in high quality resources, including access to the New Jerusalem Bible across all classes and age appropriate Bibles for the younger children. All classes have established prayer areas with crosses, candles and the range of liturgical cloths. The programme of study includes the coverage of other faiths, including Judaism.

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

Grade 2

The achievement of pupils across the phases is good overall. From the work scrutinised in the 'Golden Books' of moderated exemplars, there is better achievement than that evident in the day to day class workbooks. The judgements in assigning levels of learning from moderation are not always accurate. This applies across the phases. The lack of subject knowledge in religious education, in some cases, impacts on the inaccuracy of some of the moderated levels. The responses in the marking, including the 'wow and now' next steps do not always reflect nor apply to the content required to meet the appropriate levels of attainment. Weekly pieces of work in the religious education workbooks, demonstrate a range of tasks covering all attainment targets. Work is marked regularly, however, there are missed opportunities with the 'now' comments to expand and deepen the thinking and reasoning skills of the pupils, particularly the more able. Opportunities for extended writing in workbooks are limited, in particular for the more able. There are good examples of support for the pupils identified with additional and at times significant additional needs, with evidence that they are making effective progress over time. Questioning is not always used effectively to deepen the knowledge, skills and understanding, nor to develop the religious literacy of all of the pupils across the ability range. It is limited largely to affirming participation, rather than stretching and challenging to deepen their knowledge and understanding. The senior leadership team has recognised the need to ensure that through planned questioning, all pupils will remain clearly focussed and challenged in their learning. This is being acknowledged as a key area for action. The tracking of progress in religious education, including developed feedback to teachers, is in place. When under-performance is identified by the acting leadership team and the recently appointed leader in religious education, action is taken to ensure effective outcomes for all pupils across the ability range.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

Inspection of the typicality of teaching found that teaching met the requirements to be good overall. The teaching and use of scripture varies, with good examples of pupils being encouraged to use the Bible to explore the parables. The lack of opportunities for pupils in some year groups to make links between the Old and the New Testament and to Catholic practice, is resulting in missed learning opportunities. The use of scripture in the early years needs to be more age appropriate and interactive for these younger children. At times pupils become dis-engaged and passive learners. There was evidence from the observations, scrutiny of learning and discussion with pupils that too many pupils are being asked to regurgitate key passages from scripture and not extend their enquiry nor make effective links. Where teaching lacks creativity and inspiration, there are missed opportunities for pupils to extend their learning, including relating the texts to experiences in their own lives. The strategy of empowering pupils to discuss with each other, demonstrating their current levels of understanding and knowledge, through for example, 'talking partners' and 'hot seating' needs to be more widely encouraged. Whilst there is some evidence of creativity, these should be more frequent as they allow pupils to develop and express their own thinking on the links between belief, scripture and practice. An example of this is where pupils were unable to explain to the inspectors without prompting, the links between the Passover, the Last Supper and the Eucharist. There are some good example of where pupils are being challenged to deepen their understanding through appropriate exegesis of scripture, however, it is not yet consistent within and across year groups. The acting leadership team have recognised the way forward is to utilise models of good practice in the teaching of religious education, through a planned programme as part of ongoing professional development through coaching and modelling for less experienced teachers.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The determination and commitment of the very newly appointed leader of religious education, who is being supported by the acting senior leaders, indicates that the leadership and management of religious education has the potential to be very good. The two senior leaders are recently appointed to their acting roles and are working cohesively, with a clear and shared vision, to improving the standards and provision in religious education across the phases. They are identifying key areas for action. These include the need to follow up on monitoring with coaching and modelling good practice for effective and consistent delivery of religious education. They are also committed to continued professional development, including completing their CCRS modules in the near future.

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

- Teachers to plan for effective questioning which encourages key links to the learning including effective use of scripture to enable the pupils across the phases to develop deeper meaning and understanding and effective religious literacy.
- Provide pupils with opportunities to make appropriate links between the Old and New Testament and to Catholic practice, reaching towards the higher levels of learning across the phases.
- Ensure all staff benefit from continued professional development opportunities to secure their subject knowledge and accuracy in moderation of 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?

All teachers have a performance management objective linked to delivering effective religious education. The recently completed 'Adobe Hut' will be a wonderful resource for outdoor learning. The leadership team have also identified its planned use for collective worship.

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

Grade 2

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory forms the basis for the planned topics and through the agreed understandings in the levels of attainment in religious education. The timetables for teaching religious education provide evidence that the 10% is being fully covered. The planned sessions are through a single once weekly long session, including, in some cases, for the younger pupils. This denies the opportunities for more creative activities and for pupils to reflect and recap on earlier more recent learning more regularly. The acting senior leadership team has acknowledged this as an area to address.

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

Grade 2

The overall quality of Catholic worship, prayer and liturgy is very good. The daily prayers and worship is integral to the daily life of the school. Traditional Catholic prayers are learnt by the pupils across the age range. The 'class worship' observed during the inspection across the phases, using the diocesan model, and planned, prepared and led by pupils is an example of excellent practice. The follow-up opportunities for pupils to reflect, through stillness and express their thoughts in writing, indicate their keen and loving relationship with God. The school is actively celebrating the Holy Year of Mercy. The visual, stimulating and stunning displays in the public areas, completed by different pupils across the age range are linked to the parables. The key messages, where Jesus explained the need for mercy and compassion, are demonstrated, including the parables of the 'Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep and the message from the parable of Zacchaeus. The classroom, 'Doors of Mercy' include evidence of the pupils' research into their chosen Saints. This is given a very high profile across the school, including their reflections on their 'Pledges' linked to the 'Spiritual Works of Mercy.' These also include deep reflections from the pupils, and are worthy of note. The school chaplain outlined the high range of liturgical celebrations and how the pupils receive the Sacraments of the Eucharist during class and school Masses and have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. They also pray the Rosary in October. The class worship observed by the inspectors portrayed the awe, wonder and reverence of the pupils across the age range. There is a strong emphasis on singing a range of Catholic hymns in worship and pupils portray a real sense of enjoying their singing. Parents who met the inspectors spoke with sincere appreciation of the way the school supports, guides and nurtures their children in their faith.

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

Grade 2

The range of opportunities where the school demonstrates effective commitment and contribution to the common good and social justice is good overall. There are many excellent examples through fundraising for a number of local, national and international charities, involving the whole school community and at time in partnership with the parish and local community. Pupils understand the theological reasons behind this work; however, they need to be given opportunities to discuss, identify, plan and lead fund raising initiatives. The pupils interviewed by the inspectors, were able to describe the range of charities supported by the school, including, the Poppy Appeal, Operation Christmas Child with the Shoeboxes, weekly donated fruit and non-perishable goods to the Hounslow 'Food Bank.' They outlined the support internationally through CAFOD and their recent links being developed with a Loreto school in India, and nationally through for example the Catholic Children's Society and the MacMillan Cancer Support, and locally including donations of bibles and religious publications to Feltham Young Offenders and visits to the 'Cloisters' old people's home. Children's gifts and talents are celebrated and developed in their weekly and special assemblies. A new chaplaincy team has just been formed and the members of the school council, who met with the inspectors, are excited at this new prospect. This will empower them to take leadership decisions in school events and celebrations which will undoubtedly impact on their human flourishing. They are very proud of their high levels of sporting prowess. The behaviour, manners and courteousness of the pupils are excellent. They feel safe and know what to do if they have concerns and that any issue of bullying will be followed up. They are confident and articulate; the pupils leading the inspectors through the learning walk were informative and are wonderful ambassadors for their school.

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 2

The school offers very good thriving partnerships within the parish and throughout their local parishes and community. The partnership between the parents and the school is integral to the identity of the school. There was an overwhelming positive response to the questionnaire, where 94% of parents agree or strongly agree with what the school provides for their children. This was borne out by the parents who met with the inspectors. They spoke avidly of the way the school nurtures the faith of their children and how it impacts on their own faith and spiritual development. They welcome the opportunities to attend the regular assemblies, events and special celebrations. They appreciate how the school embraces the life of the parish, in particular the support to its catechetical programmes. They outlined how the pupils from the school 'know much more' than pupils from other schools during these programmes. They 'feel blessed' their children are part of the school and how the school 'pushes them to think out of the box' in relation to the research homework on the lives of their chosen saint, for the Doors of Mercy. The deanery links provide opportunities for colleagues to network and to share moderation activities. The leadership team are committed to widening these deanery links, to observe and share models of good practice in teaching and learning in religious education. The governing body is actively engaged through the diocesan community, including governor training and keeping up to date through the diocesan bulletin. The chair of governors explained how they fully understand their ecclesial identity. The school chaplain, through his internal connection carrying out weekly release for teachers, is an integral part of the school, and is the designated governor for the Catholic life of the school. He supports and leads the liturgical and sacramental celebrations and is proud of the school's role in the strong Catholic community partnerships.

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

Grade 2

The overall effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is good. Relationships are strong and are providing very good role model to the pupils. The chair of governors, who met with the inspectors, knows the school very well and is a past pupil and parent. She acknowledged how the school is going through a period of transition. The school has experienced a significant staff turnover recently. The chair of governors spoke of their focus on building up leadership capacity and succession planning. She recognises the need for the governing body to evaluate the impact on key actions through the self-evaluation process. The governing body are fully committed to the strategic direction of the school, and are providing guidance and support to the acting headteacher and her acting deputy headteacher. As the senior team, in partnership with the governors, they are passionate in their vision and determination to move the school forward. The acting senior leadership team work cohesively together and model excellent relationships with and between colleagues, and with the pupils, across the community. The governing body has every confidence as the school moves through this next stage on its journey with the senior leadership team. They are aware of the need to support the newly appointed staff and recently promoted leaders, through a series of continuing professional development programmes, including diocesan leadership programmes, and through the diocesan advisory service.

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

- Review the timetable schedule for religious education to ensure shorter teaching sessions, providing more opportunities for pupils to reflect and recap on earlier learning.
- Develop and review the action points identified, through a range of self-evaluation processes utilising the diocesan self-evaluation form, linked to the diocesan inspection handbook, to ensure impact is measured, to inform the next stage of development.
- Empower pupils, (including the newly formed chaplaincy team), to plan, prepare and lead the assemblies and appropriate liturgical celebrations and fundraising opportunities.