

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School

Bonner Road, Bethnal Green, London E9 9JY

4th 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. This is because the headteacher, new subject leader and leadership team, well supported by the diocesan adviser for religious education, have put in place an action plan which is delivering a good quality curriculum. This is resulting in increasing religious literacy and understanding for all groups in the school and a higher level of confidence among staff. Religious education is at the heart of the curriculum and is well funded through resources, time and staffing. Senior leaders are good role models for all staff and effective monitoring and support of new teachers has led to teaching which is typically good. Pupils show interest and enthusiasm in religious education lessons. Teachers' subject knowledge is rapidly improving and this is reflected in good pupil progress. Pupils' attainment and progress in religious education is good overall for all groups. By Year 6 pupils' religious literacy is of a good standard and they are able to reflect on and discuss aspects of Catholic faith traditions. The governing body provides a good balance of challenge and support and is active in the life of the school. The link governor for religious education is familiar with current developments and is able to contribute to the school's self evaluation.

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's overall effectiveness in this area is good. The commitment to its Catholic identity is evident in all aspects of the daily life of the school. Leaders, including governors ensure that Catholic faith is at the centre of the whole school curriculum overview and strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' experiences of the teachings and traditions of the Church. Prayer is central to the life of the school with engaging and collaborative worship experiences offered throughout the year. Leadership encourages respect for all members of the community and values each individual. There is a strong commitment to social justice and the concept of the Common Good is understood by pupils who are developing an understanding of the theology underpinning their support for the needy in their community and the wider world. Relationships and behaviour are very good within the school and pupils enjoy the many opportunities available to serve the school and wider community. Parents are appreciative of the rich opportunities offered to develop pupils' experiences of the Catholic life of the school. However, a significant number expressed a need for greater information about religious education. Self evaluation is accurate and displays an understanding of the school's identity as a Catholic school within Westminster diocese. There are strong links with the two parishes where most Catholic pupils live.

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 thirteen lessons, six acts of worship and carried out eight 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 Elizabeth Catholic Primary School, Bethnal Green 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 Pamela Brannigan	Lead Inspector
Mrs Tracey Peters	Associate Inspector
Mr Daniel Keane	Associate Inspector

Description of School

This Voluntary Aided school is two form entry with nursery in the LA of Tower Hamlets and the locality of Bethnal Green. The school serves the parishes of Our Lady of the Assumption in Bethnal Green and St John the Baptist in Hackney. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 77%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 13% and from other Faiths 5.3%. Approximately 5% of pupils have no faith background. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 67%.

There are 447 pupils on roll, with 11 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 average. There is an above average rate of families claiming free school meals. One hundred and twenty pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

Telephone:	020 8980 3964
e-mail address:	head@st-elizabeth.towerhamlets.sch.uk

DFE Number:	211-2003
URN Number:	100952

Headteacher:	Miss Angelina John
Chair of Governors:	Mr Tim O'Sullivan

Date of previous inspection:	22 nd June 2007
Previous Inspection grades:	1

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?

Since the last inspection in 2007 the school has put in place a number of initiatives to improve classroom education. These largely relate to supporting staff as they link religious education to the Curriculum Directory and improve assessment and planning. The use of diocesan support material together with the support of the religious education adviser has enabled teachers to improve their classroom practice and deepen their understanding of Catholic faith and traditions. The appointment of an experienced subject leader, who, together with senior leadership has put in place an action plan with a rigorous schedule of monitoring, is resulting in lessons which challenge abler pupils as well as providing for all groups. More teachers are in the process of gaining the CCRS qualification. This is in addition to regular continuing professional development for all staff. The introduction of the 'Come and See' programme with supporting material is resulting in an increased rate of progress and achievement for all pupils.

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

Grade 2

The Curriculum Directory forms the basis of the content for religious education through the 'Come and See' programme with the four areas of study clearly identified in planning. The programme is presented in a variety of creative and imaginative ways and pupils are aware of how their new learning is based on what has gone before. Staff are familiar with the way each topic relates to the Curriculum Directory and a whole school display of how the units link with the four areas by using key words enable pupils to see how their learning fits in. Resources, many prepared by class teachers to meet specific needs of pupils, are well used to make sure all opportunities for learning are met. Staff are provided with a high level of support throughout each section of the programme to make sure that they are secure in all aspects of what is required.

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

Grade 2

Pupils have a good level of achievement. Religious education monitoring and tracking show that pupils attain a similar level as in other core subjects. Internal tracking shows almost all pupils make expected progress over all key stages with a small number working at level 5 this year. Moderation takes place at school, deanery and diocesan levels to ensure accuracy. Achievement has increased steadily over the last two years and current data shows that this is likely to be sustained under current practice.

This good achievement is made possible because of the high expectations of the leadership team and the rigour with which teaching, assessment and planning are monitored. Teachers encourage pupils to use the correct religious language and vocabulary and teachers themselves are acquiring a good level of religious literacy. Pupils show interest and enthusiasm during lessons and are keen to improve their work. In a Year 1 lesson pupils were asked to re-enact the Last Supper and were able to link it to the mass. Older pupils are able to make references to the New and Old Testament and then with Catholic teaching and beliefs. Pupils' interest and enjoyment of religious education was evident in all lessons observed during the inspection.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

While there is some room for improvement teaching is nevertheless typically good. Teachers have high expectations and most pupils make good progress which is evidenced in their work books and in discussions with pupils. Children get off to a good start in Early Years Foundation Stage which is built on as pupils make progress through the school. Staff generally have good knowledge of scripture and the Bible and non Catholic teachers are very well supported by the subject leader. They give good, developmental feedback to pupils both orally and occasionally in their marking. Planning sheets provide a good checklist for both lesson planning and delivery. Although a few lessons lacked pace and challenge, in all classes there is a calm, positive climate for learning and behaviour is excellent. Support staff are very well deployed and make valuable contributions to pupils' learning. Teachers make careful links with previous learning at the beginning of lessons and ensure that all groups are engaged and interested. With the introduction of the 'I can' statements, pupils are beginning to take some responsibility for their own learning although this is not yet consistent across the school. Homework is set regularly which is encouraging pupils to become independent learners.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The leadership and management of religious education is good. This is due to the commitment to shared teamwork by the senior leadership and subject leader who monitor teaching, workbooks, planning and pupil progress and ensure good support is given where needed. Carefully planned continuous professional development supported by the diocesan adviser is ensuring that all staff are fully able to support pupils in religious education lessons. The school leadership is fully committed to enabling staff to obtain the CCRS qualification and supports them in this process. The detailed school improvement plan clearly identifies issues for action and evaluates current provision for religious education. Governors are committed to the school and know it well. They are aware of the areas for development and support the strategies currently in place to ensure high standards in religious education and across the school as a whole.

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

- Continue rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning in religious education to ensure pupils' attainment continues to be good and moves to outstanding.
- Support staff by providing opportunities for teachers to see outstanding lessons
- Put in place 'next step' marking to enable pupils to take responsibility for their learning

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 only issue for development from the last inspection was to continue good practice and put in place further opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship. This has been addressed, and during the inspection several classroom acts of worship were seen where pupils had written the prayers and were actively involved in planning and delivery. Children's own prayer books contribute to religious education tables in classrooms. In recent years the school has made a number of improvements in its provision of the Catholic Life. In partnership with the new parish priest there are regular class based masses in which pupils have a significant input and parents show their support by good attendance. Homework tasks which involve parents and families are enabling parents to become more familiar with the content of classroom religious education. The mission statement has been revised to enable all pupils to know and understand it.

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

Grade 2

The school views religious education as the heart of the curriculum and school life. This is reflected in the staffing and budget devoted to religious education and the good quality of resources available to staff. Across the school 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education which is planned and monitored with rigour. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and are well supported by half termly meetings linked to the aspect of the Curriculum Directory being taught. Each term staff receive induction into the Catholic nature of education through diocesan training and continuous professional development. Religious education contributes significantly to pupils' personal, spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

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

Grade 2

The provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school is good and central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic community. Staff and pupils pray together in class several times a day and each classroom has an attractive prayer focus and display board which reflects the liturgical year. Pupils are taught to pray in different ways and are given opportunities to write their own prayers, many examples of which were seen during the inspection. During class worship and assemblies pupils are reverent, respectful and able to join in the traditional prayers of the Church. Mass is celebrated in school by both parish priests on a regular basis and are well attended by parents. The sacrament of Reconciliation is also celebrated in school during Lent and Advent. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is well provided for through religious education and Catholic traditions. The quality and opportunities for prayer and worship are reviewed and evaluated regularly and action taken on areas for development.

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

Grade 2

The school community demonstrates a strong commitment to service and the Common Good. Pupils are actively engaged in fund raising for a range of charities including the Catholic Children's Society, Children in Need and Cafod. Conversations with pupils indicate that they have a good understanding that supporting these organisations show Christian witness in following Jesus' example. Older pupils show an understanding of the theology underpinning the Church's call to action for justice and peace and see the need for them to be involved in the school and the wider community.

The school is also involved in meeting the needs of its local community. For the past few years pupils have brought in items for the nearby food bank as well as toiletries for homeless people. Pupils are helped to explore themes of inequality, injustice and prejudice throughout the year. Black History Month and International Days provide opportunities for pupils to enhance their knowledge of their own backgrounds.

Pupils spoken to were very positive about the school and said they were all encouraged to respect each other and always do their best. They are familiar with the school's mission statement and are given opportunities to show leadership through a range of responsible roles including as playground buddies, lunch time helpers and members of the school council. Relationships throughout the school are very good and behaviour is excellent.

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 promotes strong links with parents, parishes other schools and the Diocese. Sustaining links with families is one of the priorities in the school improvement plan and, to this end, parents are invited into school for curriculum information evenings and subject workshops. Parents appreciate the half termly religious education newsletter which is helping them to develop a shared understanding of the mission of the school. Questionnaires indicate that parents support the work of the school and appreciate support for prayer, worship and Catholic Life. One parent said, 'I particularly enjoy attending mass and assemblies. The way the children respond and the respect they show is lovely to see. I think the Catholic nature of the school is evident from the moment you enter the building.' However, a significant number of respondents would like more information about the content of religious education and their children's progress in this subject.

Links are very good with both parishes. The parish newsletters regularly include school news which enables parishioners to see it as a vital part of the community. The parish priest from St John the Baptist who is also the link governor for religious education meets the subject leader to plan masses and liturgies. He reports back to the governing body on the religious education curriculum and the Catholic life of the school. Both parish priests are frequent visitors and acts as valuable learning resources as well as being actively involved with liturgical and sacramental life.

The school sees itself as a Catholic school within the Diocese and demonstrates this through participation in training for both staff and governors. The headteacher and senior leadership attend diocesan in-service conferences and participate in deanery moderation meetings. The action plan for rapid improvement is supported by the diocesan adviser for religious education who visits half termly for progress meetings with senior leadership and the subject leader. Links with other deanery schools including the secondary school to which many pupils transfer are very good. The school fully implements diocesan policy and guidance.

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

Grade 2

The leadership of the school has a clear vision for promoting its Catholic life. The mission statement, 'Striving for excellence in a caring Catholic community' underpins the central role of religious education and Catholic life. The new restructured leadership team have reaffirmed the school's support for evaluation of provision and its impact by putting in place a half termly review of Catholic life. Governors and local clergy are part of this process. This is resulting in a deeper understanding of the mission of a Catholic school for both staff and pupils. Governors are fully committed to this vision and are well placed to support and challenge. Accurate self-evaluation enable leaders to put in place systems to ensure the school makes good progress in both religious education and support for its Catholic life.

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

- Continue to provide opportunities and resources to enable pupils to plan and lead acts of worship.
- Introduce the key aspects of Catholic social teaching as a whole school initiative to ensure pupils have a good understanding of the theology underpinning their actions.
- Continue to develop the role of the school council in promoting justice and peace issues throughout the school.
- Ensure that parents are kept fully informed about the content of religious education.