



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

OUR LADY OF GRACE CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Part of the Newman Catholic Collegiate Multi-Academy Company
Woodland Street, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST8 6LW

Inspection dates:

24th – 25th June 2019

Lead Inspector:

Maureen O'Leary

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

Outstanding

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Outstanding

Collective Worship:

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:

Good

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- Senior leaders, staff and governors are determined in their actions to provide the very best Catholic education for each pupil. This has led to improvements in every aspect of school life.
- The pupils' heartfelt dedication to Our Lady, their school patron, and the school motto, 'Do whatever He tells you,' inspires them to have admirable attitudes to work, the school community and the wider world.
- Religious Education is consistently taught to a high standard in all classes. The head of school supports and challenges staff to constantly reflect on their teaching and improve. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are engaged in their learning. They make rapid progress in early years and this is sustained in both key stage 1 and 2.
- Collective worship is very well planned and provides the whole community with regular, meaningful and memorable times of prayer. Encouraged by their teachers, the pupils, of all ages, are able to frequently plan and lead worship.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed the new relationship and sex education policy and develop a programme of study to support its implementation.
- Ensure that all adults' questioning of pupils consistently challenges and supports their learning in Religious Education.

- Provide more opportunities during Collective Worship for reflective spiritual development.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding

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

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

- Pupils have a deep understanding and a sincere desire to live out their school mission, which is directly influenced by their great love of Our Lady of Grace. They constantly refer to her in very personal terms as a role model. "Mary helps me with guidance, she comes into my mind," "Our teachers are our guides and Mary helps them."
- All pupils have a real interest in the Catholic Life of the school and are interested in its development. Their views are listened to and acted upon by the school leaders.
- The Mini Vinnies group action plan, written in response to last years' pupil questionnaire, responds directly to pupils' ideas. The group has been very productive in creating links with the elderly in the parish and community, planning and leading Collective Worship, as well as monitoring and improving the environment. Membership of this very popular group, which meets after school each week, is rapidly growing.
- Throughout the school, there are vibrant and informative displays that promote and celebrate Catholic Life. Well-resourced sacred spaces in classrooms are used daily to support prayer. 'Pop-up' prayer spaces in communal areas, which were suggested by the Mini Vinnies following their environment monitoring, are very well used by pupils, who can be seen quietly praying before them at break times.
- The use of the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile (CSPP) has had a marked effect on the way pupils think about their behaviour and understand how to live as Christians. One pupil explained how, "All the words describe the people at our school".
- Pupils are not only able to forgive one another when things go wrong but also have an understanding of how they can help each other behave well too. They believe, "If you are not being kind someone will always say, think about what Jesus would do."
- The relationships between staff and pupils is a strength of the school. All adults offer consistent support and guidance and are outstanding role models for the pupils. As a result, the behaviour of pupils throughout the school is excellent.
- Pupils choose their class saints for their new year group, after discussion and research on their transition day each summer. They value these saints as role models and are eager to tell visitors about their qualities.
- Through discussions at school council meetings, the pupils choose a number of charities to support each year. Their thoughtful choices, active fund-raising and generous giving are all informed by their understanding that they belong to a universal family and their Catholic faith calls them to help others.

- Over the last few years, a focus on developing pupils' understanding of vocation, which involved focused weeks, talks by visitors and retreat days, has been very successful. As a result, pupils are active in discerning what God is calling them to be.
- Pupils and staff in Year 5 have both benefitted from retreat experiences at Alton Castle.
- The chaplaincy provision at the school is outstanding. The school and parish work well together to prepare the pupils for the sacraments. There is constant reflection about the quality of the sacramental programmes, which leads to informed decisions about how to improve it.
- The parish priest is highly regarded by pupils and staff, providing spiritual development that is inspirational and accessible. Pupils in Reception class delight in recalling how he counts ten Hail Mary's on his rosary beads. His work has supported the initiation of both staff and pupils into the Catholic faith.
- The school and parish regularly support and care for each other. Parishioners enthusiastically attend the weekly school Mass, enjoy the Christmas meal provided by the school and appreciate the school's support of the parish foodbank appeal.
- The school offers pastoral support to pupils both through the PSHE curriculum and the work of a very effective learning mentor.
- A group of pupils have initiated the Bond for Life after school club. This group, facilitated by a member of staff, provides rewarding experiences for pupils and a parent/carer to complete together.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.

- The school went through a process of rapid change six years ago that led to major improvements. These included improvements to the Catholic Life of the school, which have been sustained and developed by the executive headteacher, head of school and governors.
- The enthusiastic, caring and faith-centred leadership of the head of school, ensures that the Church's mission in education is at the core of all areas of school development. Her vitality and compassion are inspirational to parents and staff.
- The executive headteacher, governors and directors have provided excellent guidance and challenge to the school. Their work has been fundamental to the success of the Catholic Life of the school.
- Planned, systematic and regular monitoring of Catholic Life ensures that strengths and areas for development are accurately identified. This has then led to ongoing, purposeful and manageable improvements.
- Because leaders view Catholic Life as a whole school priority, they include it in the school development plan and staff performance management targets. This has ensured that appropriate and impactful staff training (internally, from the MAC and the diocese) has been provided.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education.	Outstanding
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	Outstanding
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	Outstanding

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

- Teachers have a very good subject knowledge of Religious Education and understanding of the diocesan strategy. This helps them to plan and deliver lessons with appropriate content, vocabulary and sequences of learning. Teachers routinely adapt lessons to meet the needs of pupils, offering both challenge and support. As a result, Religious Education is consistently taught very well.
- Teachers use a good variety of methods and tasks to engage pupils. These include the use of role play and reflective writing. Although some religious art is used in lessons, pupils rarely have the opportunity to express their ideas in their own meaningful and reflective art.
- Pupils enter the school with very little or no understanding of Religious Education. Skilled teaching, which firmly establishes basic standards, means that the children in foundation stage make rapid progress. This progress is maintained throughout the school. As a result, pupils' attainment in Religious Education is in line or above their attainment in other core subjects.
- Pupils are very rarely off task in lessons. The enjoyment and engagement in their learning means they are continually making excellent progress.
- Through their questioning, choice of activities, and feedback, staff are constantly challenging pupils to relate their learning in Religious Education to their own lives. For example, "Do you believe the Holy Spirit can work in you?" As a result, pupils, from the very youngest, are able to use what they learn to guide their own behaviours and attitudes. For example, a pupil learning about Jesus' call of the fishermen explained, "We are all called to leave our nets and follow Jesus."
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. During class discussions, all pupils are expected to contribute, where they are often challenged to explain and justify their ideas. Older pupils explained how they enjoy 'deep' questions such as, "Can we sin in heaven?" Other adults support these discussions well but their ability to deepen pupils' learning through questioning could be further developed. This would help to tackle any misunderstandings that pupils have and allow them to give reasons for answers that may appear 'wrong'.
- Pupils use the Bible regularly and confidently to locate and understand scripture. They treat it with reverence as the Word of God. They are very familiar with a variety of Old and New Testament events.
- Teachers give pupils regular feedback both verbally and through marking. The majority of this marking requires pupils to think more deeply. Pupils value their teachers' 'Fix-it' questions because they help them learn.
- Pupils take pride in their work and see their Religious Education books as special. As a result, the work in books is always at least comparable to their work in English.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

- The Religious Education subject leader, who is also the head of school, is deeply committed and skilled at improving teaching and learning.
- Termly analysis of pupils' assessment data by the subject leader and class teachers directly informs future planning. Individual and groups of pupils who are underperforming are clearly identified, so that teaching can be modified, and additional support given.
- Regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching accurately identifies the many strengths and any areas for development in Religious Education. Support from the subject leader and subsequent review ensure that improvements to teaching are generally quick and sustained.
- Staff are provided with regular training about Religious Education from the subject leader and the diocese. This keeps them up to date with diocesan expectations and supports them in maintaining high standards of teaching.
- Work within the Newman Catholic Collegiate is supporting staff in a secure understanding of expected standards in Religious Education.
- All monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education is shared termly with governors. As a result, they have an increasingly sophisticated understanding of standards in Religious Education.

The quality of Collective Worship.	Outstanding
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	Outstanding
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	Outstanding

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- Collective Worship is thoughtfully and creatively planned by staff and senior leaders. The themes of worship help pupils to have a very good understanding of the liturgical year, the CSPP, the lives of the saints and a variety of types of prayer.
- The celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the school community. Weekly Mass is planned termly with the parish priest. Pupils participation in Mass is extremely reverent and also active. They respond well to the priest's skilful homily (which is also enjoyed by the many parishioners who regularly attend) and sing with genuine enthusiasm.
- Pupils benefit greatly from the Monday CSPP assembly led by the head of school. They value her as a "happy, joyful person who is a good role model." Their knowledge and understanding of the virtues promoted in the CSPP is very strong.
- Although Collective Worship is always a prayerful experience, it can occasionally be more focused on teaching rather than prayer.
- Teachers and leaders give pupils many planned opportunities to use a rich variety of traditional prayers. Pupils have a secure understanding of their meaning and growing devotion towards them. For example, an after-school Rosary club is well attended.

- Staff have benefitted from high level diocesan and school training about Collective Worship. As a result, they are confident to lead meaningful worship and are skilled in supporting pupils to plan and lead worship.
- Pupils from the very youngest can plan and lead some, if not all, aspects of class Collective Worship. Pupils in Reception class are able to give very good reasons for choosing different artefacts for their prayer time. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they are able to plan and lead reflective and thought-provoking times of prayer.
- Although the vast majority of pupils have opportunities to plan and lead Collective Worship, school leaders and staff are aspirational to involve even more pupils.
- Pupils have a very good sense of respect for other faiths, which they have learnt about in school.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

- The content and timing of Collective Worship is thoughtfully planned by senior leaders. It carefully links to the liturgical year, the virtues promoted in the CSPP and the traditional Catholic prayers.
- Senior leaders are able to plan and deliver accessible and meaningful Collective Worship. The themes of this worship reflect accurately the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. They also develop pupils very well morally and spiritually.
- Structured and focused monitoring of all aspects of Collective Worship has led to improvements in the quality of both adult and pupil led times of prayer.
- Areas identified for improvement have been quickly addressed. Where training has been needed, it has been provided by both the head of school and the diocese.
- The evaluation and actions following any monitoring are reported to governors termly. Together with an informative headteacher report and link governor visit report, governors have a very accurate understanding of the strength of worship in the school, as well as the areas that are a focus for improvement.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	140129
Local authority	Staffordshire
<i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i>	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range	3-11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	240
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair of local academy committee	Simon Edge
Head of school	Helen Rigby
Telephone number	01782 512644
Website address	http://www.ourladyofgraceacademy.co.uk/
Email address	office@olognewman.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 th June 2014

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- Our Lady of Grace is a smaller than averaged sized primary school serving the parish of English Martyrs in Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent.
- There are currently 42% of Catholic pupils at the school.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below age related expectations.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector – Maureen O’Leary.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school’s provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspector observed teaching across four Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with the head of school.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with a group of governors (including the chair of governors and the Catholic Life link governor), the executive headteacher and the head of school, who is also the Religious Education subject leader.
- The inspector attended a whole school assembly, a key stage 1 class prayer liturgy and a key stage 2 phase assembly, a Year 6 class pupil led collective worship and a Year 1/2 class collective worship. They also undertook a learning walk to look at the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils’ behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation, data about pupils’ attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, teachers’ planning and learning journals.