



# St. John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Melrose Road, Pinner, HA5 5RA

Date of inspection: February 27<sup>th</sup> 2014

## A. Classroom Religious Education

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

**Overall Grade I\***

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy is outstanding. This is largely due to the long serving and inspiring headteacher and her equally strong RE leadership team. This team have the highest expectations of pupils and staff and are rigorous in monitoring the quality of provision. The Religious Education (RE) curriculum is rich and creative in its approach. The core scheme used by the school gives a very good structure to pupils' learning and its integration with the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools initiative overall, gives pupils an outstanding base for learning. The achievement of pupils is outstanding in both written work and in the way they are able to articulate their responses to questions. Standards of knowledge are very high in this school and pupils leave in Year 6 knowing a great deal about their Catholic faith. Many parents would like more homework opportunities for their children in RE. Quality of teaching is generally very good and especially so in the upper Key Stages of the school where it is outstanding. Marking and assessment are well developed in the school and enables pupils to make rapid progress in their understanding. Leadership is outstanding at every level and the governing body provide a good balance of challenge and support to the school.

## 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 I\***

The school's overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing is outstanding in every area. 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The experiences provided for Catholic worship, prayer and liturgy are rich, varied and highly imaginative in some cases. The school has launched several new initiatives recently to develop prayer life even further, such as the new "Prayer bag" and Word on Wednesday. The work on the Common Good and rights and responsibilities is quite exemplary in this school and pupils love discussing and sharing this aspect of school life. Parents are mostly very supportive of the work of the school and partnerships at all levels are outstanding. Governors provide a very good balance of challenge and support to the Catholic life of the school. The Catholic life of the school is judged to be outstanding overall because of the personal commitment of the headteacher and her senior leadership team. The headteacher leads her team by showing a very strong example of Catholic leadership in a clear and focussed way.

## 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 1 day in school, visited 12 lessons and 1 assembly, 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 John Fisher, Harrow 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

Mr Sean Flood	Lead Inspector
Ms Cathy Nathan	Associate Inspector
Mrs Anne Staunton	Associate Inspector

## Description of School

The school is a two form entry Catholic primary school in the LA of Harrow and the locality of Pinner. The school serves the parishes of St. John Fisher, North Harrow and St. Luke's, Pinner. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 99.8%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 0% and from other Faiths is 0.2%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 76%.

There are 427 pupils on roll, with 8 pupils with a statement of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. 23 pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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Headteacher:	Mrs A Lyons
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Jacqueline Byrne

Date of previous inspection:	13 <sup>th</sup> February 2009
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## Key for inspection grades:

<i>Grade 1*</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Very Good</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?**

The school has made very good and sustained progress in both key areas outlined in the previous inspection report. The school has worked hard to develop its skills in assessing pupils' work and has also put together many good portfolios and examples of religious education work. This work is often shared with other schools in deanery and Diocesan moderation meetings. Marking is developing very well in this school.

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

**Grade I\***

The religious education curriculum is creative and carefully structured and meets all the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. Plans are thorough and useful documents are based around the work of Dr. Margaret Carswell. Resources are carefully linked to the areas of study within the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and also linked to the teaching about other faiths. The Senior Management Team and religious education co-ordinator provide outstanding support for staff in using the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The school also cleverly uses the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools programme to further enhance and enrich the teaching of religious education and thus foster pupils spiritual and moral development.

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

**Grade I\***

Pupil achievement overall is outstanding as the pupils clearly make outstanding progress as they progress through the school. This is especially evident from Year 4 classes onwards, where pupils achievement and work is of a very high standard. Work is well set out for pupils of all abilities and matched carefully to individual needs. Pupils are enthusiastic in their lessons and are also very eager to share what they have learned. Children get a very good start in the Reception classes and are articulate and bright in their understanding of RE. Some of the written work seen around the start of Lent and the Acts of Piety was of a very high standard. The attainment in the books of the older pupils was above the national average. Pupils leave this school with very high levels of religious literacy.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils and set challenging work to stretch pupils of all abilities. The religious education subject leader plays a key role in ensuring pupil achievement remains high at this school.

### **The quality of teaching**

**Grade I**

The quality of teaching seen across the school is very good with some outstanding lessons and features seen in the higher age ranges of the school. Teachers plan well together and also effectively share ideas and resources to further deepen pupil understanding. The high expectations of teachers results in quite simply outstanding behaviour in almost every class in the school. Pupil behaviour during lessons is quite exemplary and it is rare to see pupils not actively engaged in learning.

Teachers displayed very good subject knowledge and some very dynamic and creative teaching was seen in the year 6 classes in lesson on the 3 Acts of Piety and links to Ash Wednesday. The teachers had the pupils enthralled in studying a stained glass window and pupils learned a great deal during these lessons. The language used by the teachers was both challenging and clearly stimulated pupils to want to find out more. Teachers use resources very well but the use of ICT needs further developing in some of the classes.

Teaching assistants are effective and play a significant role in helping pupils learn during lessons. Marking is developing very well in this school and teachers use constructive language to help pupils learn further and stretch their thinking. Homework is set for many pupils but a significant number of parents in response to a survey said they would like to see more done in this area.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 1\***

The leadership of religious education is clearly outstanding in this school at every level. The long serving headteacher sets very high expectations for her staff and challenges them very effectively to meet her high standards. She is very well supported by a strong religious education leadership team which includes the deputy headteacher and the subject leader who all play a key role in promoting religious education within the school. There are very good and systematic structures in place to rigorously assess RE as a subject within its own right. The school has a clear sense of its own areas for development and is mostly accurate in its own self-evaluation. Some of the judgements on quality of teaching over time are over generous and the school needs to revisit these.

The leadership teams work on integrating the Rights Respecting Schools initiative with the mission of the Church is really worthy of note and is unique and worthy of the highest commendation. This in turn impacts greatly on pupil behaviour and attitudes to learning which are outstanding. The school is very active in moderating pupils work at a deanery level and also staff attend all diocesan meetings pertinent to the development of RE. The documentation and record keeping of the school is comprehensive and is of a very high standard. Training and professional development for staff is plentiful and available to all staff as is seen by the large number of staff studying for or already possessing a higher Catholic teaching qualification.

The governing body are well led by a committed Chair and the parish priest also plays a key role in the work of the governing body.

## **What should the school do to improve further in classroom religious education?**

- Develop the use of ICT more to further enhance pupils learning and study of RE
- Review its homework policy and ensure that parents are familiar with school's expectations
- Monitor the quality of teaching and learning in those classes that are not yet outstanding and provide coaching for those staff that require further development

## **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?**

There were no issues identified in this area during the last inspection. The school itself has identified the increased focus on the prayer life of the school in the last few years. This has manifested itself in the “Prayer Bag” initiative and the school Prayer Box and Prayer Tree activities.

The school has also focussed more on global issues and sustainable partnerships both at home and overseas.

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

**Grade 1\***

10% of curriculum time is devoted to the teaching of religious education across all key stages every week. Teachers have very good subject knowledge of religious education in accordance with the Religious Education Curriculum Directory for England and Wales. Other faiths, especially Judaism, are studied in appropriate detail and also for the correct amount of time. Large numbers of staff either possess or are working towards higher level qualifications in Catholic education. The school allocates a generous budget to teaching about the Catholic faith and resources, especially books are plentiful and carefully chosen to cover all areas of the curriculum. Staff development training is carefully planned for and is extensive in this school. Recent training has focussed on the assessment and levelling of pupil's work.

New teachers are well supported in learning about the teaching of religious education.

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

**Grade 1\***

Prayer and worship are central to the life of this school and is judged to be outstanding. There are extensive opportunities within the school for daily collective worship and prayer. The children in the Reception classes are quickly introduced to the prayer life of the school in a sensitive and nurturing way. All classes have prayer areas, a prayer focus and appropriate liturgical colours. Children at all ages and all key stages play an active part in prayer and liturgy in a wide variety of ways. In many classes there are prayer monitors who have an active and leading role in both choosing and writing prayers. Some examples are the pupils in Year 2 have a Faith Club during Lent, in Year 5 they go on a residential retreat to the Loft and Year 6 attend Advent services at the local parish church. There are many more examples one could give which gives evidence to the fact that prayer and worship is an integral part of everything within the daily life of the school. The celebration of the Eucharist is carefully planned both in school and in the local parish church and many other sacramental celebrations are offered at key times throughout the liturgical year. Pupils' spiritual development is very carefully fostered in this school.

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

**Grade I\***

This area of school mission is equally outstanding. The school really genuinely understands the call to “human flourishing” in its broadest sense. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents both in school and also in the wider world at large.

Some of the local links of which the school is proud of are the Harrow Food Bank, the elderly are supported during St George’s Day celebrations and raise money for charities such as MacMillan, Lifeboats and the Children in Need appeals. The school has also developed very close and fruitful international partnerships with St Cecilia’s school in Ghana and via its Justice and Peace group links and the purchase of bicycles for Buburi Clinic in West Kenya. Both these links are sustainable and ongoing for the future. In an interview the pupils were able to state quite clearly what they were doing, the purpose of it and also the Catholic theology that calls them to service for the wider world.

Pupils really do have a highly advanced understanding of some of the great moral issues of the day and are eager and enthusiastic to do good in the world they are growing up in. The Rights Respecting Schools initiative has clearly also had a major impact in this area of development as they learn about their own rights and responsibilities as young people.

## **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 I\***

This is a strength of the school in many areas. The school is committed to partnerships and good relationships with parents, local schools, the parish and the Diocese. The religious education leadership team attend all relevant Diocesan events and the school regularly participates in deanery meetings and training. Links with the local parish church are very strong and the school is currently helping raise funds for the renovation of the church. The parish priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school and plays a key role in the Catholic life of the community. Links with parents are very effective at most levels and some new initiatives are now bearing fruit. To support family prayer the school has started to send home a “Prayer bag” containing such items as a crucifix,, statues, pebbles, Bible, rosary and other items to help families. A different child takes the bag home every week and pupils love this idea and speak highly of it. The school has also invested heavily in the Wednesday Word and all parents now get a copy of this. This contains the Gospel for the Week and ways in which parents can help their children learn. The Friday assemblies also focus on the Gospel reading for the Sunday Mass. A significant number of parents in a survey said they would like to have more opportunities to come into the school to share assemblies and liturgies and the school recognises this but is constrained by space and building issues.

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

**Grade I**

The leadership of the headteacher in promoting the Catholic life of the school has been outstanding for many years and is the driving force behind the success of this school. Her vision and commitment to promoting the Catholic life of the school is shared by leaders at all levels.

Her own personal faith and determination for the school to succeed shine through. The governing body, led by an experienced and knowledgeable Chair, make a major contribution to the work and

Catholic dimension of the school. The parish priest is also the lead governor for religious education and is fully involved in all aspects of school life.

The school's self-evaluation is both informative and rigorous and is mostly accurate.

Pupil Voice is very strong in this school and a representative group of Year 5 and 6 pupils loved talking about their school and were rightly proud and happy to be attending such a fine school.

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

- Provide more opportunities for parents to attend and participate in school based liturgies and celebrations