



Diocese of Westminster

St Cross Catholic Primary School
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DFE Number: 919 3408
URN Number: 117483

Headteacher: Mrs K. Hall
Chair of Governors: Mr A. Holbourn

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: 3rd December 2012
Date of previous inspection: 24th March 2009

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M. Betts

Introduction

The inspector would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspector spent one day in school, visited 7 lessons and one assembly, and carried out 4 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, examination of school documents, and attendance at religious services where possible.

The Inspection of St Cross Catholic Primary School 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 in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Hoddesdon. The school serves the parish of St Augustine, Hoddesdon. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 88%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 3% and from other Faiths 9%.

There are 205 pupils on roll, with 1 pupil with a statement of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is 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.

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 classroom religious education at St Cross School is good. The school's self evaluation provides evidence of clear awareness of the strengths and needs of the school with regards to religious education. There is a distinct vision for future action and a strong commitment from staff to further their skills in this subject. Pupils are gaining religious literacy at a good rate and the standards achieved are rising. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons especially when given practical activities to express their ideas.

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 school has improved well in most areas highlighted during the last inspection. The school now includes more cross curriculum pupil tasks in religious education lessons such as observed during the inspection when learning was linked to drama and ICT. Challenging more able pupils has been the focus for much training and this is beginning to impact on higher attainment being achieved. Monitoring to ensure improved attainment levels should continue.

The school should also continue to link the revised Curriculum Directory to medium term lesson planning objectives and to monitor the Directory's full coverage. Marking should be developed so that improvement comments challenge pupils to achieve the next attainment level, and pupils should be given opportunities to make these improvements.

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

Grade [2]

All teachers are aware of the importance of the revised Curriculum Directory for preparing their RE curriculum. When planning topics, teachers highlight which Curriculum Directory objectives are being taught. Tracking has begun to audit coverage and to determine where extra teaching is needed. The school has introduced a new religious education scheme of work that promotes more challenging learning and enhances teachers' subject knowledge. Modules connected to the Year of Faith are also being taught. Learning and resources are made relevant to the ages and abilities of the pupils as evidenced by the younger children using photographs of the local church and priest to discuss their membership of the Church family.

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

Grade [2]

Pupils are gaining an understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus and the traditions of the Catholic Church at a good rate. They achieve age appropriate levels of attainment. The school has sought extensive training from the diocesan advisor focused on developing teaching to challenge all pupils, and especially the more able, to achieve their full potential. The impact of this training is becoming evident as shown by raised attainment levels and also by the older pupils' depth of thought as they prepared a liturgy linked to the Advent gospels. Pupils work steadily and with interest. RE books are well presented, evidence a good coverage of the curriculum with a good variety of written activities.

The quality of teaching

Grade [2]

Teaching is good overall and some very good aspects were observed. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Teaching is effective with visual presentation, talking partners and open questioning used well to engage pupils' interest. Scripture is used well to develop learning as seen in a year 5 lesson where pupils examined Luke's account of the shepherds' reaction to Jesus' birth and how it reflects their spiritual journey as Christians. The Church's tradition is effectively linked to learning evidenced by year 4 pupils linking the Annunciation to the "Hail Mary" prayer. Classroom displays with key topic words support learning. As a result of good assessment procedures, teachers plan well to meet pupils' learning needs and use teaching assistants effectively to provide appropriate support. Marking is mainly thorough, with appropriate praise and added comments, but rarely do pupils have the opportunity to improve their work.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade [2]

The leadership of religious education (RE) is good and well supported by the school's senior leadership. The new RE co-ordinator has a clear vision and comprehensive action plan with appropriate future targets. This has resulted from rigorous evaluation of the subject. She provides strong guidance and, being non-class based enables her to be effective in her support of teachers, especially the non-Catholics. RE training is already making an impact in more rigorous teaching, more focused planning and improved attainment levels. Resources are good and include regular input from the parish priest. The parish provided financial help to purchase the new religious education programme.

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: [1]

St Cross is a very good Catholic school and provides pupils with rich experiences of the Catholic way of living and believing. Prayer and worship have a strong central role in school life. The high priority given to promote pupils' spiritual and moral development is reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils say "we are all trying to follow Jesus' footsteps". The dedicated leadership of the headteacher and RE subject leader is instrumental in very effectively maintaining and developing the school's Catholic identity.

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 responded well to the development issue from the last inspection and pupils are now more involved in planning worship through devising class liturgies and in writing their own prayers.

The school has recently formed a pupil chaplaincy team. This should be further developed with regular opportunities given for pupils to plan and lead worship, and for their ideas to contribute to the school's future worship plans.

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

Grade [1]

Religious education is important in the school evidenced by the subject receiving 10% of curriculum time; by its high budget relative to other core subjects; and by the ongoing strong support of the leadership team and governors to fund 5 teachers to attend the CCRS (Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies) course. Pupils are aware that religious education is central to school and say "what we learn in RE impacts our everyday actions and behaviour".

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

Grade [1]

Worship and prayer are integral parts of each school day and make a strong impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils' liturgical formation is very well planned to ensure the widest possible experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition of liturgy and worship and reflects well the Church's year. Mass is celebrated regularly, both in the school and the church, and parents are invited. The parish priest makes a significant contribution to the sacramental life of the school. The high quality of pupil singing enriches worship. The school leadership regularly review and plans improvements in the school's provision. For example, a pupil chaplaincy team has been formed, has agreed aims and are beginning to plan future actions such as organising pupil-led worship for the younger children. Pupils are respectful during worship and participate with sincerity. They often are

given opportunities to reflect on the worship theme and how they can put this into practice in their lives.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.
Grade [1]

Pupils are very aware of the importance of service to others. Older pupils link this to their Catholic faith. They explained “we follow the Kingdom of God values and try to make the world more fair”. Pupils entertain local elderly and give generously to many diverse charities both locally, nationally and globally. For example Harvest gifts were given to the local Food Bank. Pupils are extremely proud of their school and enthusiastically undertake a variety of responsibilities, one of these being as well trained “Peacemakers” in the playground. Relationships within the school community are very good. Pupils’ pastoral needs are supported effectively and this contributes very well to pupils’ confidence and well-being. They say “we all get along together well”. Pupils appreciate the friendliness of staff who listen to them and help with problems. Pupils’ opinions and ideas are sought through the school council and the “Have your say” book.

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]

The school engages parents in a wide variety of ways and value their contribution in sharing the mission of the school, for example, as part of the school’s celebration of the “Year of Faith” parents have been encouraged to record and display their thoughts of what being a Catholic means to them. The parents are actively supportive, evidenced by the very positive replies from the parental questionnaires. The school works in partnership with the Diocese and accesses teacher and governor training through Westminster Education service. Pupils and staff attend diocesan and deanery events. The school has effective links with the parish and works closely with the parish priest to reinforce the home, school and parish link. Pupils experience and understand the importance of the parish in Catholic life and they join with them in events such as the 50th anniversary celebrations of St Augustine’s church.

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

Grade [1]

The school leaders are strongly committed to the Church’s mission in education. They have a clear vision and mission statement, and engage all staff and pupils in fulfilling this. The school actively seeks and listens to all members of the community as demonstrated by the annual questionnaire to parents relating to Catholicity and the religious education curriculum. The Catholic identity of the school is pivotal to school life and this is evidenced by the many high quality displays and the enrichment of pupils’ experiences. The Year of Faith is strongly represented in pupils’ work and activities. The leadership understands very well the school’s strengths and development needs through their thorough and accurate self-evaluation. Governors are supportive and well informed about the work of the school.



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A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade [2]

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?	Grade [2]
Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education	Grade [2]
The quality of teaching	Grade [2]
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education	Grade [2]

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 [1]

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget	Grade [1]
The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community	Grade [1]
The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.	Grade [1]
The 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]
The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.	Grade [1]