



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

OUR LADY'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Henshaw Road, Wellingborough, NN8 2BE

DCSF School No 928/3501

URN: 122049

Head Teacher: Mr C Robinson

Chair of Governors: Rev P Griffin

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

Associate Inspectors: Mrs E O'Brien

Date of Inspection: 20 May 2016

Date Report Issued: 9 June 2016

Date of previous Inspection: October 2013

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Northamptonshire Local Authority

Information about the school

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School is two form entry on a split site in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. It was formed by an amalgamation of separate Infant and Junior schools in 2015. It serves the parishes of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Wellingborough and St Peter's, Rushden. There are currently 418 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British Heritage and the rest come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Around 75% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations or other faiths. Two thirds of the teachers and about half of the support staff are Catholics. The proportion of pupils with special needs is lower than the national average. The school is part of the North Northants Catholic Schools Partnership known as St Luke's Academy.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding **2: Good** **3: Requires improvement** **4: Causing concern**

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

Our Lady's is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. These include the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from Catholic life, the way leaders promote and evaluate the provision for Catholic life and the quality of the prayer and collective worship provided by the school. The Catholic ethos is evident in many aspects of school life with prayer and worship being central to its work. Pupils are given opportunities for spiritual and moral development through the curriculum and the wider life of the school. The quality of pupils' learning and progress in religious education is good as are the standards of attainment. There is regular monitoring of teaching, learning, and assessment. Governors know the school well and offer a good level of support. Pastoral care is good with the deacon from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart acting as school chaplain. Relationships within the school and with the parish are very good and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents are very happy with the standard of religious education, the good level of communication and the way the school supports their children's faith journey.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. This is the first inspection since the amalgamation in 2014 and the transition has gone well with senior leaders from both schools working together to ensure development. There is a clear vision for the future which is shared with governors and the whole school community. The headteacher and deputy headteacher share the religious education subject leadership between them and have produced a comprehensive action plan to sustain effectiveness and put in place further improvements. Regular monitoring is ensuring that learning is relevant and appropriate to children's needs.

The quality of self-evaluation is good. The school documentation is accurate and gives a comprehensive analysis of the Catholic life of the school and religious education. The school leadership has put in place strategies to share good practice and support new teachers. The well planned curriculum which follows the 'Come and See' programme enables pupils to make connections between faith and their own lives. Staff are good role models and are encouraged to improve their skills through training and moderating sessions in school. There are plans for **joint** moderation of pupils' work with other partnership schools. The Chaplain who is also chair of governors and link governor for religious education plays a significant role in the Catholic life of the school.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows excellent leadership of a Catholic community and is well supported by his deputy. A

member of staff promotes parish links through engaging children in the spiritual life of the parish and helping them grow in the understanding of their faith. Governors have a wide range of expertise and many are involved in the everyday life of the school. Systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which are leading to good outcomes for all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- continue to implement improvement in the areas identified in the school's self-evaluation and action plan
- ensure that assessment opportunities are carefully built into planning, enabling pupils to demonstrate their understanding at appropriate levels and that assessment tasks match the levels of attainment
- ensure marking and feedback enable pupils to take the next steps in their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. Members of the School Council play an active part in school life and older pupils help and support younger ones as playground buddies and play leaders. Several local, national and international charities including Cafod and the Cambridge Nazareth Trust are supported throughout the year and pupils are able to link this with the life and teachings of Jesus. They have also supported the local women's refuge by bringing in toys, sweets, clothing and toiletries during Advent. There are excellent links with the local parish with Key Stage 2 pupils attending Tuesday lunchtime Mass in the church as often as they wish, where they act as altar servers, readers and offertory. Pupils show consideration and respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is very good and pupils value the sense of security, friendship and community created within the school.

Prayer and collective worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate readily in class and assemblies. They respond positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey through reflective prayer. Pupils are involved in the preparation for Masses and assemblies and many attend a school prayer group which is led by a staff member and older children. A prayer garden is available for pupils at break times and at the time of the inspection children were decorating it with flowers and plants to honour Our Lady. Pupils can talk about Bible stories and have a good grasp of religious terminology appropriate to their ages. They learn the traditional prayers of the Church as well as writing their own prayers, many of which were seen during the inspection. They are familiar with the school mission statement, 'Jesus said 'Love one another as I have loved you.' Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in Year 3 and Confirmation in Year 6 are parish based with support from the school.

Chaplaincy provision is very good. The Chaplain is a frequent visitor to the school and has plans to form a group of pupils to lead liturgies and support the Catholic life of the school. Pupils are aware of the care and support available to them. They feel safe, cared for and know where to go when they need help. They value being in a friendly school where they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents value the care given to their children and the good level of communication with staff. Responses to the diocesan questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive with many appreciative comments including, 'Christ is the backbone and foundation of this school,' and 'They live the mission statement here.'

Progress in religious education is good. Most pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education and work well together. They are eager to participate in activities and keen to do well. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Lessons observed were

well planned with a range of cross curricular activities although some pupils spoken to said they would welcome more opportunities to include drama and art in their learning. In a very good Year 2 lesson, pupils who were learning about Jesus' commandment of love, peace and reconciliation were using fabric crayons to make a cloak illustrating ways of helping to be loving and kind. This creative activity reinforced the message in St Paul's letter to the Colossians in a very concrete manner. Workbooks are well presented and show pupils' progress and coverage of the curriculum. Marking is positive although there are few comments to help pupils make the 'next steps' in their learning. Other faiths are taught well and include visits to a Hindu temple and a mosque.

By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment meet diocesan expectations and all groups make good progress. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the learning of individuals and groups of pupils. The subject leaders ensure that religious education is given the same importance as other core subjects and use staff meeting time and in-service sessions to support teachers. In some classes pupils would benefit from greater differentiation in their work and more challenging tasks for abler groups.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

The headteacher and his deputy demonstrate excellent leadership of the school through the way they promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher communicates a clear Catholic vision to the whole community and is supported in this by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The 'Year of Mercy' is being celebrated at present with a 'Door of Mercy' in each school building. During the inspection the headteacher assisted by pupils led a powerful whole school assembly based on the Corporal Works of Mercy which included a challenge for pupils to put them into practice over the weekend.

As subject leaders, the headteacher and deputy produce a targeted action plan each year which show a good knowledge of areas for development. They are well placed to support colleagues. Religious education is monitored through planning, workbook scrutiny, teaching and outcomes. The school has put in place strategies to ensure all pupils achieve well including a system to enable progress in religious education across the school to be tracked more accurately. Assessment is in place although not all tasks enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge of the relevant concepts. Leaders support staff development and teachers are encouraged to undertake further training.

Governors work closely with the headteacher and have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and visits to school events. They are also involved in evaluating provision and standards including looking at pupils' work in committee meetings. The link governor for religious education acts as chaplain and plays a significant role in the life of the school. Many governors are involved in school activities. They also seek parents' views about school life and respond to any concerns. They access training provided by the diocese which has enabled them to evaluate aspects of the religious life of the school and to challenge and support effectively.

Leadership ensures that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. The school participates in local events and there are good links with other schools particularly those in the partnership. Parish links are excellent and school premises are used for parish groups. Visitors and visits are arranged to support understanding of other faiths and cultures. A good range of charities are supported throughout the year which enables pupils to develop a sense of service and show compassion for others. Provision for spiritual development

ensures that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through regular meetings as well as the curriculum information letters and 'Wednesday Word' which enable them to support their children's learning.

Provision

Grade 2

Provision for prayer, worship and chaplaincy at Our Lady's is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They include visual presentations, Bible readings, drama, singing and music. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts and a display board which often includes children's work. Masses are celebrated throughout the year and the traditions of the Church are explored with pupils. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and pupils visit the church frequently. Pupils led a Good Friday presentation for the parish with readings, prayers and hymns. The parish priest supports the school through Masses, liturgies and classroom visits. Pupils have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation every fortnight. The prayer garden is available for prayer and reflection at lunch and break times.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or better. Pupils get off to a good start in Early Years which is built upon as they progress through the school. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and a range of activities. Pupils work well and make good progress. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take opportunities to extend knowledge and develop understanding. In a very good Year 6 lesson the sacrament of anointing the sick was linked to the Corporal Works of Mercy. A video clip of the healing of the blind man was used well to emphasise Jesus' care for everyone. Well differentiated tasks enabled pupils to work with enthusiasm and interest. Very good support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Marking is positive and a few examples included suggestions of ways to improve. This should be extended across the school. There is evidence to indicate that current good standards are likely to be maintained.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The programme 'Come and See' has been implemented throughout the school and is now embedded. There are good quality resources although class sets of Bibles for Key Stage 2 would give pupils better access to scripture. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development.

The school is constantly seeking to develop practice to improve outcomes for pupils. The subject leaders are reviewing assessment procedures to enable pupils to demonstrate their understanding of religious concepts more clearly. Tracking of pupils' progress is in place and is beginning to provide a clear picture of progress in both key stages. There is evidence that good outcomes for pupils are likely to be maintained or improved as the school consolidates and builds on current good practice in all areas.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.