



St. Edmund's Catholic Primary School

297 Westferry Road Millwall London E14 3RS

Date of inspection: 6 June 2014

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade I

Overall, the quality of teaching is very good and some is outstanding. The curriculum and its implementation within and outside of classrooms match very well with the Curriculum Directory and engages pupils very well in their learning so that their progress in acquiring religious literacy is at least good and often better. Children have very positive attitudes to learning as a result of generally very good teaching. Regular participation in training events, including those within the diocese, are much appreciated by all staff and promoted well by the very good leadership and management of religious education within the school. All pupils, including those with specific learning needs feel valued in lessons which are carefully monitored and staff supported.

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*

Pupils receive an excellent all round experience of Catholic education and are inspired to do their best to implement this in their lives. Religious education is highly valued and receives at least the recommended time within the curriculum. Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school. This is clear from the point at which visitors enter the Reception with the prayer board facing them directly. Pupils much benefit from the closeness of the local parish Church and from the well-considered input from the local clergy. The parish and school work closely together to make sure that the children and their families flourish. In turn, children engage exceptionally well in efforts to fulfil the Church's social teaching. In this they have the excellent role models of the headteacher, her staff and the governors. The latter provide excellent examples of decisions made on the basis of Catholic teaching. Parents are closely involved with the school. Their presence in assemblies and school events as well as in the local Church is a very strong feature of the St Edmund's community.

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 six lessons and an assembly, and carried out five interviews with the parish priest, 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 in lessons, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Edmunds, Millwall, 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

Sheila Nolan	Lead Inspector
Daniel Keane	Associate Inspector

Description of School

The school is a one-form entry primary in the local authority of Tower Hamlets and the locality of Millwall. The school serves the parish of St Edmund's, in the Isle of Dogs. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 90%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 4.5% and from other Faiths is 4.5%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is close to 62 %.

There are 215 pupils on roll, with 6.9% of pupils with statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is an above average rate of families, 37.8% claiming free school meals and in receipt of the pupil premium, additional government funding.

Telephone:	020 7987 2546
e-mail address:	office@st-edmunds.towerhamlets.sch.uk

DFE Number:	211 3431
URN Number:	100951
Headteacher:	Ms G. O'Flaherty
Chair of Governors:	Ms C. Butler

Date of previous inspection:	25 September 2008
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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?

Since the last inspection, the school has strengthened its understanding of how to apply the diocesan levels of attainment in the classroom. Diocesan support material has been well used to develop provision for the most able and the curriculum content has been mapped to the Curriculum Directory. Extensive use is made of new technologies to encourage pupils' research and enhance presentation of their work. Non-Catholic teaching staff are better supported than previously.

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

Grade I

Programmes of study and schemes of work illustrate very carefully where the four strands of the Curriculum Directory are not only taught but also assessed. The implementation in the classroom engages pupils very well as it generally matches well the pupils' needs. Resources are imaginative and shared effectively among staff to support the curriculum effectively. Links to other Faiths are carefully orchestrated, particularly through topic-based learning. Pupils have already explored aspects of Hinduism, Islam and Judaism, for example, through the celebrations of festivals. Although progression is very well considered in curriculum planning as witnessed in the classroom provision observed on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, staff are still striving to develop and deepen their understanding of the new schemes of work. There are clear plans to integrate the study of other religions more fully into the planned scheme of work. Scriptural links are much in evidence with pupils at ease in relating practice to its basis in scripture.

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

Grade I

Pupils achieve very well in religious education and at least similarly to their achievement in other core areas. The school uses the diocesan levels of attainment successfully to assess and moderate how well the pupils are doing. Increasingly, the school is providing challenging opportunities for the most able pupils to achieve very well but also ensuring that those who find learning difficult are doing as well as they can. Pupils' work in books as well as their work in class illustrates their positive attitudes to learning in religious education. They participate enthusiastically in lessons and demonstrate a very secure understanding of how well they are doing. Pupils' progress in understanding and using the language of narrative and doctrine is very good as is that of the impact of their work on their day-to-day living. They are developing well their grasp of the language of liturgy through formal worship and the many other opportunities to express their faith both in the classroom and throughout the school day.

The quality of teaching

Grade I

Teaching is consistently at least good and sometimes outstanding as seen in the school's own records, in the impact on the children's learning and in the observations carried out during the inspection. High expectations, systematic planning, thoughtfully differentiated tasks, and excellent deployment of support staff, all contribute to at least good and often very good learning. There is an increasing emphasis on deepening pupils' understanding and knowledge but not all staff are yet fully effective in ensuring that learning is genuinely thorough and that time is very well used, especially for groups not supported by an adult. Classrooms demonstrate a really positive climate for learning so that children are happy in, and enthusiastic about, their work. This was clearly seen in a Year 3 lesson on the impact of inspiring actions where pupils willingly engaged with figures from St John Bosco to Nelson Mandela. Year 6 were able to take the theme of the gifts of the Holy Spirit further and were inspired in an outstanding session, to research independently on individuals exemplifying these gifts.

There is much good practice in the checks on pupils' written work with some very helpful feedback to pupils on how to develop their work. Pupils are beginning to respond actively to teachers' written comments but this practice is not yet fully embedded across the school. Pupils' understanding of the diocesan attainment targets is implicit in their work but there is scope to make these better known to the pupils and for staff to use them more fully to drive improvement.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade I

The impact of the very good leadership and management of religious education is clearly demonstrated in the very good progress of the pupils in curriculum religious education. The coordinator promotes a clear and enthusiastic vision of the Church's mission to the staff. All staff teaching religious education are well managed, including those who are non-Catholics. Regular monitoring of, and training of staff are given a high priority, in line with other core areas of the curriculum. Nevertheless, currently no staff have a formal Catholic qualification in religious education although other training does take place. Pupils' attainment and progress is carefully recorded not only in their written work but also their achievements in other learning activities. Resources are well managed and really good attention is given to creating an environment that is stimulating, aids reflection, and reminds children daily of their place in the universal Church. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate.

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

- Encourage staff to become involved in further training to gain accredited qualifications in Catholic religious education.
- Further develop the marking practice and the use of diocesan attainment targets within religious education so that teachers' useful guidance is responded to effectively by all groups of pupils.
- Provide further training for staff so that they deepen their awareness of how pupils develop their understanding and knowledge in religious education.

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?

Since the last inspection, the school has worked on its mission statement to distil its essence and sum it up as 'Christ at the centre of the community...Through Christ we learn.' This extract is well known to the staff and pupils and clear to visitors and parents. Displays across the school are not only creative and stimulating but display key words and promote prayer and reflection. Staff training has been a priority and has involved very welcome and helpful sessions with the parish priest. Links with the parish and diocese have strengthened so that pupils have well considered opportunities to experience liturgical events. Links with parents have also strengthened.

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

Grade 1*

Religious education is at the heart of the curriculum and this is effectively demonstrated by the priority given to staffing, accommodation and the budget in this small school. Governors and the leadership team do all in their power to support the Catholic ethos of the school and the way in which the staff and pupils apply their faith in daily life. Professional development in religious education is a top priority for staff and is facilitated well by senior leaders and the local clergy. Attendance at diocesan training is regular and much appreciated.

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

Grade 1*

There is excellent provision for prayer and liturgy across the school. The deep involvement of families of pupils in the school, as well as in the local parish, means that many children are able to take part in regular Sunday worship in the adjacent St Edmund's church. The parish priest, together with the headteacher, plan carefully for opportunities for formal worship suitable to the ages and experience of the pupils. This well thought-out approach is applied throughout the liturgical year and involves traditional Catholic practices as well as formal liturgy. Pupils in Key Stage 2, for example, followed the Stations of the Cross with the Parish Priest as part of their preparation for Easter. The school also provides many opportunities for the children to pray the rosary during May. Staff and pupils pray together in class several times a day. Pupils and parents were clearly comfortable and respectful during prayer – as observed at the inspiring assembly around the theme of Pentecost. Pupils engage very well with preparation for class Masses and other acts of worship. Pupils become familiar with the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent. The school has overwhelmingly Catholic families, but it considers and celebrates the main festivals of other religious traditions and the very few children from other faiths in the older year groups are very well integrated into the community.

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

Grade I*

The school, at all levels, including governors, does all it can to promote the well-being of its pupils and their families. All aspects of children's talents are nurtured to encourage a holistic flourishing. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and is well demonstrated by the pupils' harmonious playing and learning together, by their courtesy and respect for each other and the adults around them. At their own level, pupils do understand why it is important to help others. Their tasks in lessons seen, for example, had them exploring why inspiring figures such as Pope Francis act as they do to support the poor. As a result, pupils are very actively engaged in acts of service and in fund-raising events for those whose need is greater than their own. Many charities benefit from their support from CAFOD to local hospitals to world disaster funds. Governors set the tone for an approach to decision making asking themselves what is the 'right thing' to do rather than the seeming obvious answer. For example, the school is part of a local credit union with children involved in running this.

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*

Excellent partnerships have been built up and sustained since the last inspection with parents, the parish and the diocese. Parents are universally well satisfied with St Edmund's and the happy environment in which their children flourish. There were well over a hundred returns of the questionnaire representing 89% of families, all extremely happy with the school. The school feels itself as an integral part of the diocesan community of schools and takes part in all available training and events. Diocesan policy and guidance is much valued and implemented as well as possible. Staff at all levels much value the input into their training provided by the parish clergy. The school has an excellent understanding of its role in this rapidly changing community and is active in planning for likely future needs. Parents from all groups are welcomed to the school. Impressive numbers now attend assemblies and events and clearly feel at ease in the community. Links with the adjacent parish are very fruitful and resources are used to the best advantage of the children and their families.

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

Grade I*

There is an unstinting commitment at all levels of leadership to the Church's educational mission. The example from the headteacher inspires her staff. Leadership is creative in finding ways for the community to experience the richness and opportunities of a Catholic way of life. The school is committed to excellence in all aspects of its work. Staff are very well inducted into the life of the school and those who are non-Catholics are supported very effectively in their growing understanding and knowledge of the Faith. Governors make an excellent contribution to sustaining and developing the school's Catholic life, not least by applying Catholic principles to decision making on many fronts. The school's self-evaluation is modest in its judgement of how well it successfully promotes the Church's global mission.

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

- Deepen even further the fruitful links with the parish, particularly to extend the school community's experience and understanding of the Faith.