

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



Inspection Report of Denominational Character and Religious Education

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary School

Occupation Road, Corby NN17 1EE

DfE School No: 940/3509

URN: 141633

Head Teacher: Mrs Maire Hayes

Chair of Governors: Mrs Donna Gallagher

Reporting Inspector: Mr Mark Holdsworth

Associate Inspector: Mrs Laura Maw

Date of Inspection: 31 March 2022

Date Report Issued: 12 May 2022

Date of previous Inspection: 3 February 2016

The school is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
Is part of Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academies Trust

Information about the school

Our Lady of Walsingham is a two-form entry primary school in Corby, Northamptonshire. It predominantly serves the parish of Our Lady of Walsingham, Corby. There are currently 385 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. Around 50% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations or other faiths. More than half of the teachers are Catholics as are two thirds of the teaching assistants and support staff. The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is 19%. The school has been a member of Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academies Trust since February 2020.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

Our Lady of Walsingham is a good Catholic school where leaders, governors and staff are fully committed to the distinctive Catholic nature of the school. This is evident in the nurturing environment and positive relationships between all members of the school community. Parents returned more than 120 questionnaires; the overwhelming majority were positive. They recognise the work the staff do to support each child as an individual and how they have helped to build a wider community. As one parent said, "This is more than just a school, it is a very special place." Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy Religious Education (RE) lessons and appreciate the opportunities they have to get involved in chaplaincy and charitable fundraising. They understand and appreciate the role that staff have in developing their faith: "Our teachers help us connect with God."

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has excellent capacity for sustained improvement. Leaders have addressed the issues highlighted for improvement in the last inspection report and have made significant progress in all areas, though teaching and learning would be improved still further by giving pupils more opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and understanding at a greater depth.

The school self-evaluation document of RE is accurate and has been contributed to by staff, governors and pupils. It is evaluative and has identified areas to develop which are then planned for systematically. The RE curriculum leads have taken on their role this academic year but have already identified the areas they need to develop to ensure that RE education is outstanding.

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors are fully committed to developing the school's Catholic dimension. They have demonstrated their commitment to the Catholic life of the school by employing a school chaplain who provides excellent support to pupils, staff and parents. This is a real strength of the school. There is a proven track record for school improvement and leaders have very strong capacity to continue their journey to a judgement of outstanding for overall effectiveness.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- To support the younger children in taking further responsibility for developing the Catholic life of the school.
- To increase the number of children reaching higher levels in RE by giving them more opportunities to demonstrate greater depth of thinking in their independent tasks.

Catholic life

Grade 1

The Catholic life of the school is outstanding. This is because of the high priority the headteachers and governors have given to nurturing a Catholic community. They have employed a school chaplain who explains that her role is “to ensure that Christ is at the centre of everything the school does.” Her influence can be seen in all areas of school life and is greatly valued not only by pupils, but also staff and parents. She supports the spiritual and mental wellbeing of the whole community. Staff are visited at least once a week and greatly value having someone in whom they can confide. Since the introduction of Class Dojo during the pandemic, the chaplain has introduced a small online “Parents Praying” group. She is hoping that as restrictions are relaxed this will continue to develop and that they can meet in person.

The school mission statement is displayed prominently around the school. The children learn the motto “*Hand in hand with God, we love, live and learn,*” using actions in Key Stage 1 to help them remember. As they move through the school, they learn more about this mission and understand that it is underpinned by gospel values. This is a nurturing environment where children’s personal development is prioritised. As a result, children’s behaviour is excellent. They listen well, encourage each other and know how to forgive and be forgiven. Pupils are keen to tell you all about their school and are enthusiastic about the opportunities available to them.

There are numerous ways for children, in particular the Key Stage 2 children, to get involved in the Catholic Life of the school. There is a chaplaincy team made up of children who have applied for the places. All of Year 5 are enrolled as Minnie Vinnies and there is a “Cool2BCatholic” after-school club. Through these different groups the children are given a real sense of service. They write letters to the housebound in the Parish, help with Mass at a local care home, serve at in-school termly coffee mornings for elderly parishioners and visit care homes to sing carols at Christmas. They also regularly raise money for charities such as Mary’s Meals, Missio and Cafod.

The school use the ‘Journey in Love’ scheme of work to teach Relationship and Sex Education. This is supported by the ‘HeartSmart’ scheme of work which a group from the Trust have worked on to ensure that Catholic values are used to underpin the messages that they teach.

Religious Education

Grade 2

Pupils enjoy their learning in Religious Education and their achievement is good. Pupils make good progress across all key stages including children with special educational needs and those in receipt of pupil premium. They are religiously literate and engaged in their learning. The children get off to an excellent start, and in Reception pupils were eager to talk about their current learning and with the aid of a class book could talk about their previous learning. They could retell the story of Easter and were reflecting on Mary Magdalene’s surprise when she found Jesus’ tomb empty. Pupils approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm. They are comfortable to share their ideas and as a result their attainment is good. The school has identified that they could challenge the more able children even further and are looking to develop this through higher level questioning and challenge, during independent tasks.

All of the teaching observed during the inspection was good. Teachers plan good lessons which are linked to pupils’ current assessment. They employ a range of strategies to engage children in their learning, including art and drama. In a Year 4 lesson, children were writing all they knew about Good Friday around some beautiful paintings they had made of the cross. In Year 6, they used “thought tracking” to help them reflect on the feelings of the disciples after

the resurrection. Pupils' exercise books are well presented, demonstrating the high expectations of teachers and pride that pupils take in their RE work. Behaviour for learning in lessons is excellent and pupils show respect for each other's ideas. They have a clear understanding of Catholic traditions. In Year 2, they stood to greet the Gospel whilst learning about Good Friday and then went to the prayer garden to venerate the cross.

Leaders and governors use the *Come and See* programme to ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. They ensure that RE is a core subject through the time dedicated to it as well as through the budget. The RE curriculum leads are new to their roles this academic year and have made a very positive start. They monitor learning and have a clear idea of the improvements needed to make RE outstanding. They monitor the provision through book scrutinies, lesson observations and pupil voice and are ably supported by the RE governor.

Collective Worship

Grade 1

Collective worship is outstanding. It is an integral part of the school day which the pupils respond to extremely positively. In addition to a thought-provoking Monday Gospel assembly, which is planned to expand on the theme of the previous Sunday's readings, pupils attend a singing, praise and worship assembly each week in which the children participate with joy and enthusiasm. During the inspection, the Key Stage 2 children participated in an assembly reflecting on how Jesus died on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven. The pupils engaged with respect and reverence. With the support of the school chaplain and their teachers, pupils plan and lead prayers and liturgy. Children regularly attend and look forward to Mass in the parish church and Key Stage 2 celebrate Mass in school. The Year 5 Minnie Vinnies are involved in celebrating Mass in a local care home where they experience reading scripture, leading prayer and music ministry. Year 4 write and perform a Passion play during the annual Holy Week Mass. Pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year and could talk about how these were celebrated in school. During the pandemic, the school chaplain introduced a daily "Sacred Space" which teachers and pupils can use on a daily basis to lead worship in class. It involves a short reflection based on the week's Gospel presented in a way that supports prayer in the classroom. This has been a real success and is now being used by other local Catholic schools.

The environment is rich with reminders that Christ is at the centre of this school. Every class has a prayer focus with religious artefacts which often includes children's work. Across the school there are examples of religious art and artefacts which are predominantly created by the pupils of the school. During Lent, pupils' interpretations of the Stations of the Cross are displayed prominently around the playground. The school chaplaincy team have developed a 'Prayer Shed' which is used for prayer activities and has been transformed as a Christmas Crib, a Chapel of St Joseph and a quiet place to pray for the Holy Souls. During the time of inspection, it had been decorated with individual crosses made by each child on Ash Wednesday.

The school has outstanding links to the parish which is on the same site. The parish priest is a regular visitor and a number of staff, as well as children, are parishioners. The children prepare for the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation in school. They are also on the reading rota every six weeks, organised by a member of staff. Pupils prepare in school for First Holy Communion in Year 3 and Confirmation in Year 6, helping to promote these links further.

Leaders promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship. There are many opportunities for pupils to lead worship both in class and in whole school events. School

leaders are active participants in the school's collective worship and prayer life, acting as role models and recognising that it is essential to the spiritual life of the school. Parents are well informed and talk positively about collective worship in school. The chaplain uses Class Dojo to let them know about things happening in school and in the local parish. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship form part of school self-evaluation and planning for continued improvement.

The Inspectors would like to express their gratitude to the headteacher, governors, staff and pupils of Our Lady's for the warmth of their welcome and their willingness to answer questions. We very much enjoyed our visit to your school.