



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GEORGE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thorneloe Walk, Barbourne, Worcester, WR1 3Y

Inspection dates	12th – 13th June 2014
Reporting Inspector	Denis Cody

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	205
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Fr Brian McGinley
Telephone number	01905 25841
E-mail address	head@st-georgescatholic.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2009
DFE School Number	885/3390
Unique Reference Number	116924

Headteacher	Mr Michael Painter
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Previous inspection:	2
This inspection:	2

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed three full RE lessons with the headteacher. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny, spoke to some parents and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. He held meetings with the headteacher, RE co-ordinator and parish priest who is also chair of governors. He observed a prayer service and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, and pupils' behaviour. He looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about successful teaching and learning in RE, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St George's is a smaller than average size Catholic primary school in the parish of St George in Worcester. The area served by the school has less social deprivation than the national average. Currently 92% of pupils are baptised Catholics and 20% are from an ethnic minority background. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly below the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of SEN is slightly above average while the proportion at school action level is below average. Pupils' attainment on entry is generally below that typical for their age.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation St George's considers itself to be an outstanding Catholic school. In terms of its teaching and learning, the progress and attainment of its pupils and its curriculum provision this judgement is based on effective evaluation and analysis, and is accurate. The school shows outstanding commitment to its Catholic life and collective worship, but in its planning recognises that to be outstanding greater emphasis needs to be placed on producing formal processes of self-evaluation in these areas and using them to guide future development. As the focus of inspection in the diocese is on the quality of school self evaluation and the effectiveness of school procedures for monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning, the overall judgement is that, while St George's is in many respects an outstanding Catholic school, self evaluation is not yet outstanding.

School self-evaluation

School leaders are committed to accurate self-evaluation as the basis of school improvement planning. The school's judgement that teaching, learning and curriculum provision in RE are outstanding is based on firm and reliable evidence and was supported during the inspection.

A programme of lesson observations is carried out by the headteacher and RE co-ordinator, and together with the RE link governor they conduct work scrutinies, pupil interviews and learning walks. In each case teachers receive feedback about strengths and areas for development, which also inform RE improvement planning. Recently this has led to a renewed focus on written and verbal feedback from teachers to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their learning further. The co-ordinator supports staff in lesson planning and good practice is shared throughout the school. The headteacher

reports termly to governors on the outcomes of this monitoring and on evaluation of progress in RE across school.

Pupil attainment is carefully assessed, recorded and analysed throughout the year and the data is used to inform planning and promote pupil progress. To ensure the accuracy of attainment data the co-ordinator has worked with teachers to moderate pupils' work, and there are plans to extend this in collaboration with other schools. The data also contributes to a review of staff training needs and planning for professional development. Following such a review this year, the school has decided to include a separate RE staff development programme in its RE action plan for next year.

The quality of pupils' learning is evaluated, as well as their attainment. Lesson observations, interviews and book scrutinies identify independent learning, personal reflection and insight in pupils' work, their use of biblical texts and their ability to discuss their faith and how it relates to their everyday lives.

This programme of self-review also ensures the RE curriculum is always under scrutiny. Analysis of teaching, learning and attainment leads to constant re-examination of what is taught and how it is taught. For example, use of the '*Attainment in RE*' document to moderate pupils' work revealed the need for greater focus on the 'Learning from Religion' attainment target. This was then included in curriculum planning, and the quality of teaching and learning of this attainment target is earmarked for future review. Similarly the Nursery level RE scheme of work was incorporated into Reception class planning when the baseline assessment data showed this would better meet the needs of pupils. Curriculum reviews since the last inspection have led to the school providing an enhanced programme of multi-cultural education for its pupils, and more comprehensive support for the parish-based catechesis programme with greater emphasis on parental involvement.

Evaluation of Catholic life and collective worship takes place throughout the school year, formally and informally, led by the headteacher, senior management team and RE co-ordinator. There is an RE steering committee comprising staff and governors which promotes the Catholic life of school and regular liaison between the RE co-ordinator, parish priest and RE link governor. The headteacher reports to the governing body on the Catholic life of the school. Aspects of Catholic life have been included in learning walks, with feedback to staff and governors, and a parent questionnaire on Catholic life has provided feedback. Teachers have carried out prayer and resource audits, and pupil liturgy leaders have been involved in evaluating classroom prayer areas. The RE co-ordinator draws up and monitors an RE action plan which outlines long and short term objectives.

However the clear link between review, analysis and future planning that is evident in relation to teaching and learning is not present here, and the school itself has correctly identified the need to involve the governing body more formally in reviewing its Catholic life. To be outstanding in this area, school leaders need to identify the different aspects of Catholic life and devise formal procedures by which their quality and impact upon pupils can be monitored and evaluated. This process would involve input from staff, governors, pupils and parents. The outcomes would then feed directly into future planning for school improvement.

The headteacher and newly appointed RE co-ordinator provide strong and inspirational leadership of Catholic life and religious education in the school. They have a clear vision for the school and a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. They are supported by a committed staff, parish priest and governing body. Therefore the school has excellent capacity for improvement in both Catholic life and RE.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Pupils of all abilities and genders and the small number eligible for free school meals achieve excellent progress and attainment in RE. Baseline assessment shows that most children enter Reception class with very little religious knowledge or experience. They make good progress in the early years classes and by the end of Key Stage 1 have caught up with their peers. Attainment and tracking data show that learning and progress accelerate during Key Stage 2, so most pupils leave the school at or above the level of diocesan expectation. From an early age they are developing the skills to become independent learners and acquiring the learning skills associated with RE.

The school's provision of Catholic life and collective worship is outstanding. Built around the motto, '*Achieve, Believe, Care*,' the central role of its Catholic life is emphasised throughout the school and is fully supported by pupils and respected by parents and parishioners. Through its emphasis on mission and vocation it promotes the children's spiritual and moral development encouraging them to treat each other with care and respect, and to recognise and respond to the needs of others. Liturgy leaders in each class take responsibility for setting up classroom prayer areas and helping prepare for school Masses. Opportunities to assume such roles of responsibility in school and to take part in charitable fundraising emphasise to pupils how they can live out gospel values in their own lives.

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and a key part of every celebration, led wherever possible by children themselves. They take an active role in planning and celebrating Masses during the year. Whether it is class, school or school/parish Sunday Masses, the children are always eager to participate fully by reading, singing and praying, and do so thoughtfully and reverently. In prayer assemblies and services, sometimes involving speakers from outside the school, children celebrate and learn more about their faith. Through individual and class prayers, often incorporated into their RE lessons, children become familiar with modern and traditional prayers and liturgy. After each experience of collective worship children have time and encouragement to reflect on the meaning. The children played an active part in the design and planning of the school's newly refurbished chapel, which now provides an opportunity for individual or small group prayer and reflection both in and out of lesson time.

Much of the teaching in RE is outstanding. It is a core subject and the same standards are expected in RE as in literacy and numeracy. With encouragement and support from the new RE co-ordinator all staff are committed to constant improvement through outstanding teaching and learning in all lessons. To promote this the school is focussing on high quality marking, both written and verbal, to show children the steps they need to take to move their learning forward.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and access to appropriate training and resources. They use technology well in the delivery of their lessons and employ a range of teaching strategies and styles to ensure all pupils can access the curriculum. Teachers and teaching assistants reinforce and support the learning of children with special education needs and other groups of children who may need additional support. Lessons are well-planned and differentiated to meet the needs of all children. Pupils are motivated and enthusiastic, enjoy their work, and their behaviour is excellent.

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

The school's RE curriculum provision is outstanding. It is based on the *Birmingham Archdiocese Curriculum Strategy*, '*Learning and Growing as the People of God*,' and uses the planning and assessment guidance from the document. This programme of work is adapted to meet the needs of the pupils and is enhanced by a variety of additional activities. A focus on spiritual, moral and vocational development is evident in all aspects of school life and is reflected in relationships and attitudes within the school, as well as in support for a wide variety of local and Third World charities, including a school in Malawi. The school also has a strong environmental and ecological commitment which promotes responsibility and ethical considerations. Strongly rooted in its own parish and with close links to local Catholic schools, involvement with charities such as CAFOD and Fr Hudson's Society helps children see their place in the wider Catholic family.

Sacramental preparation is parish-based, supported by work in school and parental involvement. Children take part in a multi-cultural week during which they learn about other faiths, visit their places of worship and share their experiences in a whole school assembly.

Recommendations

Develop formal processes for evaluating the quality and the impact on pupils of the school's Catholic life