



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST AUGUSTINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 13th -14th June 2013
Reporting Inspector Denis Cody

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils 3-11 years
Number on roll 279
Appropriate authority The governing body
Chair of governors Miss Helen Burke
School address Avenue Rd
Handsworth
Birmingham
B21 8ED

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Date of previous inspection July 2008
DFE School number 330/3329
Unique Reference Number 103431

Headteacher Mrs Mary Stanley



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 and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. He held meetings with the RE governor, staff, and parish priest. He observed a prayer service and RE workshop 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 an aspect of Catholic life in the school, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Augustine's is a larger than average size Catholic primary school, with 78 part time nursery places, in the parish of St Augustine in Handsworth, Birmingham. The school serves an area of significant social and economic deprivation. Currently 78% of pupils are baptised Catholics and 72% are from ethnic minorities. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average while the number with special needs and/or disabilities is below average. Attainment on entry is below the national average.

Main Finding

In its self-evaluation St Augustine's School judges itself to be a good Catholic school in which children receive a high quality religious education which extends beyond RE lessons and is threaded through everyday life in school. Pupils' attainment and progress, the quality of teaching and collective worship, and the effectiveness of the curriculum are all judged to be good. The involvement of pupils with the Catholic life and collective worship of the school and the contribution of the curriculum to spiritual, moral and vocational development are judged to be outstanding. These judgements are based on sound evaluation processes and are therefore justified. The school now needs to continue to develop its self-evaluation by building on and refining these processes, particularly in relation to evaluating the quality of learning and the quality and impact on pupils of its Catholic life.

School self-evaluation

School leaders are committed to accurate self-evaluation as the foundation for school improvement planning in relation to Catholic life and Religious Education. Formal and informal reviews and audits feed into RE and whole school action plans, staff training and performance management.

The school's judgement that RE teaching is good and sometimes outstanding is based on firm evidence and was supported during the inspection. Joint lesson observations are carried out at least once a year by the headteacher and RE co-ordinator. Feedback with recommendations is provided to individual teachers and subsequently reviewed, and strengths and areas for development are shared with all staff. In addition, the RE co-ordinator maintains an overview of teachers' planning, book trawls are carried out twice a year, pupils are interviewed, and the head teacher and RE co-ordinator carry out learning walks and classroom drop-ins.

The school's judgement that learning is good is based largely on the evidence of good pupil attainment and progress; good teaching; comparison of the quality of work in RE and literacy; and pupils' enjoyment of their work in RE. To build on its comprehensive assessment processes for attainment and teaching the school should now focus on the quality of pupils' learning by considering the skills necessary for learning in RE, how to ensure the curriculum provides opportunities for their delivery and how to assess pupils' achievement of these skills. In order to raise attainment in RE by helping children to achieve higher levels, the school has identified the need to make greater use of the '*Levels of Attainment in RE*' when planning learning opportunities. To this end a new planning sheet highlighting these levels has been produced.

Self-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. In addition school leaders receive on-going informal feedback about all aspects of Catholic life and collective worship from staff, governors, parents and school visitors. Provision for Catholic life is audited annually by the headteacher and RE co-ordinator. Their findings inform the RE Action Plan which addresses future needs and development and feeds into the School Development Plan.

The governing body has recently been restructured to include a mission and strategy committee to oversee the Catholic life of the school. Governors receive regular reports from the headteacher and RE co-ordinator and are involved in the monitoring and evaluation process. The RE governor visits the school regularly meeting with the co-ordinator and taking part in book trawls and learning walks. The school could further enhance and formalise these activities by compiling a clear definition of what comprises its Catholic life and considering the processes by which each aspect can be monitored and evaluated. Then, built into the annual programme of self-review, time could be set aside, perhaps as part of an RE inset day or at staff meetings, for a focused reflection on the quality as well as the provision of Catholic life. It could involve input from parents, pupils and governors as well as staff.

Monitoring and review of the RE curriculum takes place each summer term, led by the RE co-ordinator who produces a subject audit and an action plan to outline future development and training needs. This is shared and discussed with all staff who then work together to identify whole school targets for the coming year and incorporate all the subject reviews and action plans into a single school improvement plan. School self-evaluation has identified as a target for development providing further opportunities for children to deepen their ability to engage with questions of meaning and purpose.

The recommendation made in the previous RE inspection about providing for the development of the RE co-ordinator was addressed, though ironically the same situation has again arisen with the recent promotion to another school of the experienced RE co-ordinator. Currently the headteacher is assuming responsibility for RE and two members of staff are being supported in their preparation to share the role as part of a restructuring of the senior leadership team.

The headteacher and senior management team, supported by a committed governing body, provide strong and effective leadership of the school's Catholic life and religious education. Their vision for the school and understanding of its strengths and areas for development are grounded in accurate self-evaluation. Therefore the school's has excellent capacity for improvement.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Pupils' attainment in RE is above average, with the majority in each year group working at or above the level of diocesan expectation, and in line with attainment levels in other core subjects. Baseline assessment shows that attainment on entry to Nursery is well below average in RE in terms of prayer life, religious knowledge and experience. From this low starting point children make good progress throughout the school, so that by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 2 most are achieving average or above average levels.

Children enjoy learning in RE lessons and have the opportunity to develop as independent learners. Most make good progress in learning over time, including those with English as an additional language. The majority of pupils with additional learning needs make at least satisfactory progress.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school's Catholic life and collective worship. Along with the rest of the school community they were fully involved in producing the new school mission statement and motto which are displayed around the school, contributing to the physical environment which promotes and reflects the Catholic ethos, and is widely used to promote the school's mission. They respond positively to the school focus on vocation and service through involvement with charitable work, by their positive behaviour and respect for one another and by serving others for example as peer mediators and play leaders helping younger pupils.

Collective worship linked to the religious seasons and key celebrations is an integral part of the school day. RE lessons are enhanced by time spent in prayer or prayerful reflection. Children take part enthusiastically and reverently in the weekly Mass and in the whole prayer life of the school. They are actively involved in planning and preparing class and year group assemblies, and have the opportunity to offer spontaneous and composed prayers and to lead class prayers. Their understanding of the liturgy is enhanced by an established cycle of weekly talks led by the parish priest.

Teaching of RE is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and where appropriate provide opportunities for children to work in pairs, small groups and independently. Lessons are differentiated and well-planned and provide clear progression in knowledge and understanding. Where available, additional classroom support is used to help meet the learning needs of all pupils. Links are made with children's own lives and experiences within RE lessons. Focused learning objectives and clear success criteria have improved children's learning. The school ensures that appropriate in-service training is provided for all teachers to ensure high quality teaching. Pupils are well-behaved and eager to take part in RE lessons.

The RE curriculum is based on the diocesan Curriculum Strategy '*Learning and Growing as the People of God*,' and planning and pupil assessment follow the diocesan recommendations. Ten per cent of the timetable is allocated to RE. The curriculum is enriched and adapted to better meet the needs of all pupils through school visits and a variety of extra-curricular activities. For example there has been a cross curricular focus on the Year of Faith. Pupils' awareness and respect for other faiths and cultures is celebrated at key points during the year and during a multi-cultural week. The '*All that I Am*' scheme is used in Years 5 and 6 to deliver a programme of family life and sex education.

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.

Recommendations

- Develop formal processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning in RE
- Compile a clear definition of what comprises the school's Catholic life and develop processes by which it can be monitored and evaluated.
- Make greater use of the '*Levels of Attainment in RE*' when planning learning opportunities for higher level RE skills