



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST ANNE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lynton Avenue, Weeping Cross, Staffordshire, ST17 0EA

Inspection dates 28th – 29th April 2015
Reporting Inspector Mr T J Hughes

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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| Type of School | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3 – 11 years |
| Number on roll | 235 |
| Appropriate authority | The Governing Body |
| Chair of Governors | Mr G Owen |
| Telephone number | 01785 663128 |
| E-mail address | office@st-annes-weepingcross.staffs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | April 2010 |
| DFE School Number | 860/3480 |
| Unique Reference Number | 124371 |

Headteacher Mrs J N Lomas

Previous inspection: 2

This inspection: 1

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 3 full RE lessons with the headteacher.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, members of the governors' ethos and Catholic life committee, staff, and parish priest
- The inspector observed a prayer assembly, the celebration of Mass for the whole school, prayer clubs 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.
- Other documents such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals were read alongside the self evaluation.

Information about the school

- St Anne's is an average size Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Anne's Weeping Cross in Stafford.
- Weeping Cross is an area of private housing on the southern outskirts of Stafford.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 69%.
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 17.4%.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average as are the numbers with special needs and/or disabilities.
- Attainment on entry to the Nursery is at age related expectations and rises prior to entry into the Reception class.

Main Findings

- At St Anne's Catholic Primary School the provision of religious education, the Catholic life of the school community and the collective worship are outstanding.
- The school has reliably judged itself as an outstanding Catholic school. This judgement is underpinned by a wealth of strong evidence.
- The school leaders have demonstrated their vocation, commitment and vision in the way that they have developed all aspects of the school's provision of faith. The school and parish community is strong, welcoming and supportive.
- The school leaders have taken time to consider the important ingredients of Catholic life. As a result the ethos of the school has been enriched at all levels. The pupils are confident and secure. They recognise the inclusive community in which they learn and acknowledge the impact of the Catholic faith on their lives.
- Through formal teaching, assemblies, wider opportunities and the day to day routines of the school, the sense of faith influencing actions can be perceived.

School self evaluation

Catholic Life and Collective Worship

- Since the last inspection the governors and senior staff have established comprehensive systems for evaluating what the school offers to the pupils in terms of an experience of faith.
- Governors, senior leaders and the parish priest meet as an ethos and Catholic life committee to undertake evaluation through work scrutiny, the audit of the prayer life, the outcomes from lesson observations and evidence from attendance at collective worship.
- They have considered carefully what it means to be part of a community of faith and how each person contributes to making manifest the mission statement of the school. Where they have recognised that the ethos could be enriched, for example by providing more opportunities for pupil prayer or making more meaningful links with the parish, they have set about this with vision.
- The school's self evaluation has identified the need to enhance the programme for staff training. This training has informed planning and has encouraged a culture of spiritual enquiry in each classroom and good questioning from the children.
- The elements of faith and mission across the school year have been carefully considered and together with key liturgical seasons and celebrations the school has initiated 'Faith Week', provided retreats for governors, staff and sacramental year groups and joined together in prayer with other schools within their 'Catholic Knot' partnership.
- Sound self-evaluation has had an impact on the quality and style of collective worship, which is purposeful and engages all of the pupils and gives rise to a shared sense of vocation.
- The senior leadership team and governing body are dedicated to Catholic education. They ensure that the mission statement is alive through personal

example. Their evaluative and reflective practice determines that the vision for the school is current and addresses the needs of the learners. The team continuously strives to ensure that a high degree of challenge and enrichment is prevalent in strategic planning.

- Discussions with key school leaders confirmed that collective worship and class based liturgies are monitored frequently by the members of the school leadership team and school governors.

Governance

- The governors are fully committed to St Anne's as a Catholic school. They strive for all pupils to fulfil their God given potential.
- Governors monitor the provision of religious education through lesson observations, book scrutinies and attendance at collective worship.
- Governors provide challenge for the senior leaders in school by taking an active role in the development of the school's self evaluation of RE and Catholic life. Over time their intervention in the school's self evaluation document has led to amendments and additions. For example as the school prepares to welcome new members of the teaching staff, the governors have ensured that the process of induction for these new teachers is firmly in place in plans for training for next academic year.
- Governors strive to consolidate the improvements that have been made in religious education, particularly with the monitoring of RE assessments, which has been conducted more regularly by the ethos and Catholic life committee and has provided a more in depth picture of the standards of achievement in RE.
- The governors are clear about their own needs as they prepare to enter in to a multi-academy company with other local Catholic partnership schools. They recognise their capacity to make a contribution to a new academy collaboration and understand that this new venture will help the school to broaden its perspective as Catholic education moves forward locally. Governors have undertaken a skills audit, which has enabled them to ensure that the make up of the committees will best serve school development.
- The governors are eager to engage with the parish and actively seek out the views of parishioners as to the contribution the school makes to the parish. They attend the school's 'Family Mass', which takes place each month and provide feedback to the school about the quality of this worship, which in turn has an impact on the growing Catholic life of the school.
- The governors have an acute sense of the need for leadership succession within the school and look to develop upcoming staff members through performance management, training and encouragement.

Religious Education

- Religious Education in the school is led with commitment and skill by the RE leader. Class teachers acknowledge the guidance she provides and the good standards achieved are a testament to her high aspirations. She has benefited from the input of the diocesan RE advisor, links with Catholic schools within the local partnership and the opportunities to moderate provision.

- There is a rigorous, annual cycle for monitoring in RE which informs and develops the action plans for the future. Regular book trawls, lesson observations, planning scrutinies and assessment monitoring are undertaken by the headteacher, deputy and RE leader. Pupil interviews are organised in order to establish a very clear picture of pupils' attainment, curriculum provision and areas for development.
- An RE action plan is developed by the school staff team, drawn from the outcomes of the strands of self evaluation. It is agreed by the governors and sets out the aims for the development of RE each year.
- There is a regular review of policies, and practices in RE in line with new guidelines and information provided from the diocese.
- The monitoring cycle in RE has led to a sound knowledge of the teaching and learning in the school. The school has judged that lessons are effectively planned and delivered. The RE monitoring documentation shows that all lessons are at least good or better.
- The teaching seen during the inspection confirms the self evaluation judgement of outstanding.
- The impact of the high quality teaching is also closely measured with the attention paid to scrutinising pupils' work through book reviews and pupil interviews. This evidence shows that the pupils enjoy their RE lessons and feel they work well.
- Teachers and other adults are thus very aware of their pupils' capabilities and of their prior learning and understanding and plan very effectively to build on these.
- The strong subject knowledge of teachers is matched by high quality marking and feedback. Pupils understand in detail how to improve their work and are consistently supported in doing so. Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout RE lessons, anticipating where they may need to intervene and doing so with striking impact on the quality of learning.
- The pupils readily confirm that teachers' marking will identify 'next steps' so that they are able to extend and improve their learning.
- The feedback from teachers also encourages pupils to further engage in personal reflection.
- In recent RE development, the impact of lesson observations has been significant. Where senior staff have identified either common strands for enhancing learning across the school, or specific issues within a year group, they have provided good quality consultation with the teachers. This has led to improvements in teaching and opportunities for pupils' learning, in particular the way in which pupils respond and engage with their faith.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

- When children enter the nursery their attainment in RE is low. As a result of a well planned RE curriculum, outstanding teaching and sturdy systems of assessment and monitoring, the majority of pupils meet or exceed the diocesan expectations of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Standards of attainment in RE are high and consistently in line with the very good outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. For example 97% of Year 6 pupils achieved or exceeded diocesan RE expectations in 2014.

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.

- As a result of the thoughtful considerations in the RE provision, the RE leader has developed a curriculum structure which facilitates inspirational learning and a culture which allows the pupils to be confident in their growing faith.
- The teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to discuss with and challenge pupils to extend their thinking about a given topic with RE. The teachers and classroom support staff work well together in a reflective manner to ensure that the pupils experience lessons, which challenge and motivate.
- RE lessons are carefully planned. Teachers think deeply about both the content of the religious knowledge and how they are going to provide opportunities for pupils to respond to the issues raised or experienced. Teachers incrementally build on the religious knowledge base of the pupils, so that as they move through the school their understanding of the Gospels, the life of Jesus and their own faith gains depth.
- Teachers are skilled in using a range of teaching techniques to engage all pupils in a meaningful way. Examples include using facial expressions to show emotion in gospel stories, using attractive pictures to help the pupils respond to the story of the Road to Emmaus, and a discussion about personal trust assisting pupils to better understand the motivation of Doubting Thomas.
- The organisation of teaching is effective. Class teachers are supported by additional adults in delivering the lesson and in helping the achievement of pupils at all levels. Differentiated tasks are organised for a range of ability groups, although the most able pupils are often no more challenged than the middle ability learners and extension tasks add to their work complement rather than take them to a higher level of enquiry and attainment.
- The pupils are inspired by the teaching and respond with flair and insight. They can answer complex questions and can relate their prior learning in RE to a new task with confidence.
- Pupils take great pride in their work. The quality of RE work in their books and on displays is of an equally high standard to that seen in the English work. Their faith is given due respect through finely presented writing and illustration. Each pupil has their own professionally bound prayer book which further elevates the aspiration they have to do their very best in their RE work.
- RE lessons regularly feature an element of prayer and pupils demonstrate a deep level of thinking in their sincere reflections. Pupils are able to verbalise their vocation and appreciate the calling of others to fulfil their role in the world through service and commitment.
- Opportunities to explore the dynamics of other major world faiths are planned into curriculum delivery. Not only do the pupils gain knowledge about these faiths, but they also recognise that better understanding will lead to greater levels of respect. Whilst pupils support people overseas through fund raising, their awareness of the realities of these communities and their needs are limited.
- The pupils' response to the experience provided is outstanding. The pupils display very good levels of growing spiritual maturity. They are willing to discuss their faith and consider the impact it has on their lives. They understand the presence of God in their lives. For example pupils stated that the promotion of faith made them know they were 'never alone'. Pupils are secure within the school community and acknowledge that the mission of the school has true meaning and they view the school as their 'second home'.
- The governors and senior school staff are fully committed to ensuring that the pupils' experience of Catholic life is rich and meaningful and will assist each child to understand their vocation in life.

- The headteacher constantly seeks to make the mission statement a key ingredient in all aspects of the school's provision. She has the highest expectations of her staff team and the pupils. She is fully committed to the productive spiritual relationship with the parish and other local Catholic schools.
- The headteacher and other staff lead a prayer assembly each week where they reflect on aspects of the liturgical year, the sense of spirituality in the school and how each person's vocation can be lived out at school, at home and in the wider world. Pupils contribute to these assemblies through drama, prayer and music. The assemblies feature prayers that have been composed by pupils in response to their RE teaching or their contemporary reflections on the Catholic life of the school.
- The well prepared celebration of Mass in church for the whole school is a highlight of the week. The more recently arrived parish priest has encouraged the pupils to take a fuller part in the worship and as a result, the prayers and hymns are appropriately pitched for the pupils. A chosen year group provides a reflection on the gospel, which strengthens their engagement with the liturgy. Senior staff have high expectations of pupils' reverence and participation and consequently the celebration of Mass is reflective, joyous and grace-filled.
- Parents are well informed of both the opportunities for collective worship and the provision of RE in the school. The manifestation of the mission statement is understood by parents, giving them confidence that their children are growing within a committed and faithful setting.
- Initiatives to promote causes and support charities are now a strong part of the school's mission. The school has invited speakers in to present the information about their work in aspects of world aid. Pupils have been motivated and responded enthusiastically by designing fund raising activities which have provided good support for the given charities.
- The governors and school staff are forward thinking and demonstrate the capacity to both consolidate their effective provision and develop the school further. Training for incoming staff has already started and the organisation for the membership of the multi academy company is in place. School leaders are determined that future structures will allow the school to make a wider contribution to the local Catholic community and also provide opportunities to enrich the school further.

Recommendations

The school should:

- Consider higher ability pupils by planning activities within the lessons which provide a greater level of challenge to the more able.
- Broaden the pupils' global understanding by providing more specific information and experience of communities across the world.