Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST ANNE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
WEEPING CROSS, STAFFORDSHIRE

Inspection dates	29th – 30th April 2010
Reporting Inspector	Rev Michael Dolman

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	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Geoff Owen
School address	Lynton Avenue Weeping Cross Stafford Staffordshire ST17 0EA
Telephone number	01785 663128
E-mail address	headteacher@st-annes-weepingcross.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2006
DCSF School Number	860/3480
Unique Reference Number	124371
Headteacher	**Mrs Justine Lomas**

DRE
Making Christ Known Today

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 3 full religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning, students' behaviour, and held meetings with the parish priest, governors, staff, and groups of students. He observed the school's work, including Mass and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and students' work.

Information about the school

St Anne's is an average sized Catholic primary school that serves the parish of St Anne, Weeping Cross. There are 199 pupils on roll (with another 26 pupils attending nursery), of whom 71% are baptised Catholic with the majority of other pupils coming from other Christian denominations. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and a very small number come from ethnic minority groups. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals at 1% is well below the national average and the number of children with special educational needs (12%) is also below the national average.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

St Anne's is a Catholic school with many outstanding features. The school mission statement is very much alive amongst those involved in the school's life and consequently pupil outcomes are outstanding. Pupils' attainment in RE is always at least above average as they move through the school with all groups of learners making at least good progress. Pupils' behaviour is marked by care and consideration for one another and an enthusiasm for all aspects of school life. Children appreciate the contribution they are able to make to the quality of school life through the various responsibilities that they undertake. They are actively involved in the preparation and leading of collective worship and this is done in a confident way that is inspired by their faith and understanding.

The quality of teaching in RE is mostly good with evidence of significant outstanding practice. Less effective teaching can occur when there are gaps in teacher knowledge and understanding. Good assessment procedures allow pupils' progress to be tracked and standards in RE to be monitored by the school. Outstanding planning means that the curriculum provides good challenge for the different ability groups of pupils. There has been very good improvement to the enrichment of the curriculum including developments to the sex and relationship education and the sacramental preparation programme. The school makes very good provision for collective worship.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement in its Catholic life is outstanding. The school has made significant progress against the area identified for improvement at the last inspection and has been energetic in developing its RE and Catholic life in other respects. The school has demonstrated that it has determination to improve combined with a dedicated staff and effective systems of monitoring and evaluation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the variety of prayer and devotions used in collective worship in line with the diocesan document, *Teach us to pray*.
- Skill staff and pupils to lead collective worship including times for reflection in RE.
- Develop curriculum planning and teacher knowledge and understanding so that pupils are able to make connections between different strands of study in RE, and appreciate how their learning fits into the bigger picture of our Catholic faith.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' attainment is always above average in both key stages and is high in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Key Stage 2. They make at least good progress in each key stage and progress at Key Stage 1 is exemplary. On entry pupils' religious knowledge, understanding and experience varies according to the family's religious practice. In Key Stage 1 pupils write their own prayers of thanksgiving, praise, sorrow and petition. They produced their own psalm based upon the school's mission statement. Children recognise the seven sacraments and have a simple understanding of their significance, for example, in baptism our sins are washed away. They are able to re-tell stories from the Old and New Testaments using story boards and are beginning to use different literary genres to enter into the story in an empathetic way, for example, letter writing. Pupils are aware of the different liturgical seasons and know that Advent and Lent are seasons of preparation when the Church calls us to change our lives by giving things up. In Key Stage 2 children are able to use thinking skills to analyse and compare scripture stories given in the different Gospels and some of the liturgical prayers. They are able to see how the sacraments relate to each other and understand the deeper symbolism of the signs and gestures used. They are confident in looking up bible references and have a broader more detailed appreciation of scripture, for example the message of the Old Testament prophets and the letters of the New Testament. The prayers they write show a greater maturity and they have a greater knowledge of the traditional prayers and devotions of the Church. They are developing independent research skills. The high quality of curriculum planning and the excellent support from teaching assistants means that all learners, including those with particular learning needs, are able to make at least good progress. The children enjoy their RE lessons and they are motivated, mature and enthusiastic learners who engage well with all learning opportunities.

Pupils' contributions to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school are excellent. They know the mission statement well and are able to speak about how it is lived out in their daily circumstances. Year 1 children sum it up as trying to be like Jesus – apart from performing the miracles! There are many opportunities for children to take responsibility as house captains, head boy / girl, as *special friends*, play leaders and as school council members. These roles foster growth and confidence in their leadership and responsibility skills. They appreciate how these can make a real difference to the quality of life in the school. Key Stage 2 children refer to Christ's teaching to love one's neighbour as oneself as the motivation for helping those in need through our prayers and charitable giving. Children at the school exhibit a very special maturity and a care and consideration for each other through their listening, giving way and standing up for each other. Assemblies often award good citizenship and celebrate those qualities that are essential to the Christian life.

Pupils' response to collective worship is outstanding. They are very responsive to the opportunities provided for prayer. The children are happy to contribute to moments of spontaneous prayer and participate in a confident and natural way. During the celebration of the weekly Mass held in the adjacent parish church, children were calm, attentive and reverent. They sang the hymns joyfully with understanding and expression. Spoken responses, bidding prayers and scripture readings were delivered confidently and clearly. The altar servers were very competent and served with dignity. Pupils make a significant contribution to preparing and leading whole school assemblies. Overall, collective worship makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

The headteacher provides strong leadership and management. The school mission statement which has been formulated in prayer and as the school hymn is very well promoted and is alive at all levels of school life. There are committed relationships between all stakeholders, who strive to make the school the best that it can be. Staff work well together and are open to receiving help and support as well as sharing their ideas and initiatives with each other. Through excellent monitoring and evaluation the headteacher has a detailed and accurate knowledge of the school. The school

development plan and the RE action plan are actively addressing and monitoring the next steps for improvement.

The RE co-ordinator provides outstanding leadership and management of the subject. She has an enthusiasm and love for this role and has made a very significant contribution in supporting new staff at the school in their delivery of RE: through assistance with planning and team teaching, new staff have grown in understanding and confidence. Monitoring of the subject is thorough and close communication with the headteacher has led to issues being identified and responded to very effectively. The detailed RE plan and self evaluation show the great range of areas that are being tackled and the monitoring of more long term issues. RE leadership demonstrates a very positive impact upon the development of this subject and the broader Catholic life of the school.

The governing body is stable and effective in its leadership of the school. Its members have strong involvement in the parish and are well known to staff and pupils alike, through their regular informal visits to the school. They have a love for the school, recognising the importance of its role in the life of the parish. The RE link governor is the parish priest and he meets with the RE co-ordinator twice per term. Together with the headteacher's report the governing body know the school very well and are very aware of the areas identified for development and how these are to be addressed.

The school's leadership promotes good community cohesion. The school mission statement provides the foundation for the school's sense of identity and means that all are made to feel welcome and very much a part of the school community, irrespective of religious or cultural background. There is a close relationship with the parish community and with parents. The school is generous in supporting charities and pupils are enthusiastic in their interest and support of the work that is done both locally and internationally. Whilst drawing predominantly from the White British community, there is a wide cultural heritage that the school actively draws upon and celebrates in its display work, assemblies and themed curriculum weeks. The school is establishing links and nurturing relationships with primary schools in different social settings and with the local network of schools including the Catholic feeder secondary school.

The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

The quality of teaching in RE is mostly good with evidence of significant outstanding practice. Where teaching is at its best there is clear communication, good questioning, a variety of learning experiences, the development of higher thinking skills, opportunity for prayer and reflection and the encouragement for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Where teaching is less effective, there are gaps in teacher knowledge and understanding. Teaching is well resourced and teachers make very good use of artwork and ICT to enhance learning. Work is well matched to the spread of abilities and pupils remark that work in RE is challenging. There are excellent relationships in the classroom and teachers value the contributions that children make in discussions. Marking is good but varies in quality. There is very good practice in Key Stage 1 where annotation and questions prompt further thought. In Key Stage 2 practice is less consistent: comments tend to be restricted to affirmation with reference to the lesson objectives. Teaching assistants are involved effectively and work well with the classroom teacher to support individuals and groups of children, particularly those with special educational needs.

The school's assessment is good. Informal assessment features in day-to-day lessons as a plenary activity and pupils also evaluate their learning as they progress through each unit using a simple self assessment form. Their evaluation is validated by the class teacher although teacher remarks on these are limited. End of unit summative assessment is well established and is held on the school's intranet. The RE co-ordinator is now able to analyse results in order to make judgements about pupils' progress. Staff are beginning to look at samples of work against the national levels for RE and in the future they hope that this may help to inform the level of challenge that planning provides.

The RE curriculum is outstanding. This has been well adapted to suit the needs of the pupils so that it provides good challenge for individuals and different groups of learners. Long, medium and short

term planning are well organised and annotated with provision made for different ability groups. The curriculum has been very well enriched by outside speakers who offer insights on different faiths, cultures and charitable causes. The parish priest makes a substantial contribution to RE lessons and helps bring another perspective to pupils' learning. Sex and relationship education is based upon the *All that I am* resource. There has been good communication with governors and parents and appropriate training given to staff. Resources have been purchased and organised to enrich the curriculum focus upon our Catholic heritage and visits have been arranged to places of cultural significance such as St Chad's Cathedral. Sacramental preparation is done in partnership with the parish priest and the parents and each year the school reviews its provision. Developments have included a monthly family Mass in the parish and sacramental preparation retreat days at Alton Castle. The curriculum makes an excellent contribution to pupils' moral and spiritual development.

Provision for collective worship is very good indeed. All children are encouraged to participate fully in the different opportunities for prayer that occur throughout the school day and during different seasons of the year, for example Rosary in May and October and Stations of the Cross in Lent. The weekly school Mass held in the church is led by each class in turn, including reception. The Mass is based upon the feasts and seasons of the liturgical year. There is also the opportunity for each class to celebrate their own annual class Mass, which is related specifically to that age group. The Monday Gospel assembly, topic assembly and prayer assembly are weekly whole school gatherings where children make significant contribution in preparing and leading. Circle time provides a space for children to bring their reflections on different issues into a time of prayer. During Advent and Lent the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated.