



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Marsden Road, Stafford, ST16 3BT

Inspection dates 8th – 9th July 2014
Reporting Inspector Mary Baines

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	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Lyn Cycles
Telephone number	01785 356685
E-mail address	headteacher@st-patricks-stafford.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2009
DFE School number	860/3469
Unique Reference Number	124362

Headteacher Mrs Ann Goodison

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 3 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. She held meetings with the chair of governors, another governor and staff. She took part in school Mass, observed a whole school assembly, 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. She 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 the school mission and vision, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Patrick's is a smaller than average size Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Patrick in Stafford. Stafford is an area of mixed housing, some privately owned and some council properties. The families in the school are from a mixed socio-economic background, most parents are supportive of the school. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 67%. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 22%. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average as are the numbers with special needs and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average overall. The school has a governor run nursery which is sited next to the reception classroom. Since the last inspection a new deputy has taken up post and also an assistant head has been appointed for the new academic year.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation St Patrick's school judges itself to be a solidly good school which has improved in several areas since the last inspection. Leaders and governors demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission, promote high standards in all areas and rightly judge leadership to be good. Collective worship is good with pupils taking a leading role in the preparation and presentation of a variety of liturgies, assemblies and meditations. The school has excellent links with the parish it serves and with the wider catholic community. Teaching is good and better and has improved overall since the last inspection. It is outstanding at times leading to high attainment in RE. Within the context of a school which is undergoing close scrutiny, significant progress has been, and continues to be, made. The judgments are accurate and reliable as rigorous processes for monitoring and evaluation have been implemented and are now being embedded and developed. The priorities identified by the school for improvement and development are appropriate and are being successfully addressed.

School self evaluation

There are thorough processes in place in order to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life and RE including an in depth analysis of pupil attainment. Governors have a clear understanding of the Catholic life of the school by monitoring and evaluating the development and action plans as well as reviewing related policies and the headteacher's report. The governors take an active part in formulating and carrying out the school action and development plans and are especially interested in ensuring that the Catholic life of the school pervades all areas. They are involved in frequent visits to the school and carry out learning walks, including the monitoring of learning that takes place in the classroom. They give feedback on their visits and monitoring exercises to the leadership team so that

effective strategies for development can be implemented. The governors hold school leaders to account both at governing body meetings and also during their visits to school.

The school accurately judges its monitoring and evaluation of the provision for RE as good, based on the effective assessment cycle which has been put in place. Regular book trawls, planning scrutiny, lesson observations and pupil interviews all give valuable insight into current practices and provision, in addition to formal methods, informal 'drop-in' observations enable the headteacher and subject leader to secure an impression over time. These are then fed back to teaching staff during staff and pupil progress meetings. Areas for development are highlighted, itemised in the school improvement plan and provided for through professional development targets. Teaching staff now gather a range of evidence across all abilities, level it as a 'best-fit' and analyse it to ensure that children are performing at or above national and diocesan expectations. The school has a detailed plan for continuous improvement which is supported by the diocesan RE adviser.

The school has correctly judged the way in which pupils respond and participate in collective worship to be good. Pupils engage in all acts of worship and are learning to deepen their relationship with God through prayer, reflection and participation in Masses. The pupils are respectful and act with reverence in all prayer situations. They work hard to share ideas as they plan liturgies and celebrations for the whole school community both in school and for Sunday Mass. The number of pupils attending Sunday Mass is increasing. This is due to the collegiate work of the school, governors and parish priest. The governing body is deeply committed to the life of the school, they are mindful of their responsibilities in upholding and promoting the Church. This is evidenced through appointments, committees and in particular their involvement in monitoring the Catholic life of the school. The governors are a determined body and are effective in holding school leaders to account for continued improvement in RE and Catholic life. The parish priest supports the school, governors, staff, parents and pupils. He understands what a good Catholic school should be and through his friendship and guidance is determined to ensure its success and ongoing development. In particular he talks to the pupils about the idea of vocation and the call to priesthood which Year 6 pupils respond well to. He supports school retreats and visits to Alton Castle. There are regular opportunities for the children to respond to those less fortunate than themselves and they do this through a variety of fundraising events.

The school judges teaching to be good and during the inspection all teaching observed was good and better with some outstanding features. Senior leaders acknowledge that there has been some difficulty in the past in recruiting suitably qualified teachers for the teaching of RE and for the passing on of the faith but this has been addressed and all pupils are now taught RE by suitably qualified and committed teachers. All teachers attend the appropriate training sessions provided by the diocese. Lesson observations show that teachers' subject knowledge is strong and teaching is good or better. Observations are followed up with a review meeting when the teacher and the RE leader discuss the outcome of the lesson and identify any training needs or pupil interventions that are needed. The pupils are benefitting from an improved marking scheme which includes steps for improvement, extension tasks and allocated time to rectify any mistakes in their work.

Self evaluation rightly considers that the effectiveness of the curriculum is good and well balanced, offering a range of experiences for the children. The pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development is rightly judged to be good because of the strong leadership qualities demonstrated by the governors, senior leaders and RE leader ensuring that RE is central to everything in the school including excellent behaviour, positive relationships which form the ethos of the school. Sex and relationship education is given using the diocesan recommended scheme and it takes place in the context which is in keeping with the teachings of the Church. The governors ensure that their responsibilities are fulfilled in all areas.

The quality of collective worship is good with many excellent features. The quality and variety of worship is exceptional for pupils and staff. The school benefits from the support of the parish priest, chair of governors and other governors who make a significant contribution to school life and in particular liaison with the parents

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for pupils are in line with diocesan expectations. Pupils enter school with below average knowledge about the Church and the Catholic faith. By Year 2 many pupils are working at or above diocesan expectations and by Year 6 all pupils are, attainment is good in RE because teacher expectation is high and pupils are encouraged to use higher order thinking skills thus enabling them to become independent learners. All pupils have positive attitudes to learning in RE. Progress is consistently good and better, it is accelerated in Year 3 and Year 6 during sacramental preparation. Many pupils learn effectively from the Faith as well as about the Faith.

The Catholic life of the school offers great benefits to the pupils; the children have a good sense of their personal worth and they understand that their faith can help them to respond to the challenges of daily life. They express their views and beliefs with confidence and they appreciate that the teachings of Jesus and the Church provide a model of life. They have a developing sense of vocation and know that God calls us to serve. They respond well to the opportunities the school offers them for their spiritual, moral and vocational development.

Leadership and management in RE and Catholic life are good at all levels. The headteacher has a clear vision of Catholic education which she shares with all stakeholders. Clear direction is set and the school strives continually to improve and develop on its faith journey. Monitoring and evaluation is good and is being used as an exemplar to other areas in the current drive for school improvement.

Teaching in RE is good and better overall. Planning is good and assessment data is used effectively. Whole staff training on raising attainment in RE has proved to be very valuable as staff are committed to continuous improvement. Higher order thinking, skilful question and answer sessions as well as deep knowledge, understanding and love of the faith are displayed by teachers and other adults who work with the children. Teaching follows the diocesan scheme and is enlivened by engaging strategies such as power point presentations, exploration of art and music and by teachers' personal witness to the Gospel values. There is clear progression across the key stages, tasks are well differentiated and marking is effective thus ensuring that any misconceptions are rectified and next steps are identified. All pupils are motivated, engaged, enjoy their learning and behave well. Pupils in Y5 are all adept at finding and using scriptural passages independently. Reflection, meditation and prayer are part of all religious lessons, a wide variety of prayer spaces are in both classrooms and around the building. Children's good work is celebrated and shared in class and in good work assemblies.

The curriculum in RE is designed to challenge the pupils to reflect upon their own lives by learning about other people past and present. Staff consider the prior learning, attainment and individual faith journey of each child in a holistic approach. The Catholic life of the school enriches the spiritual journey of each child and their family through the Sacramental programme and other liturgical celebrations. The parish priest leads the parents of the children being prepared for the sacraments in a structured programme to meet their needs and encourage them on their faith journey. Pupils' learning is promoted and enhanced by the many and varied assemblies, acts of collective worship and individual reflection time. The curriculum is further enriched by the creative features of the curriculum which encompasses other faiths and cultures, this takes place during specific focussed celebrations. This enables the children to appreciate diversity, understand the global Catholic community and learn to value and respect others who are different to themselves. The RE curriculum benefits from the broader use of resources such as visits to Alton Castle, St Chad's Cathedral and Oscott Seminary.

The provision of collective worship is very good because of the range and quality of expertise within the school and because of the excellent example given by the headteacher in this area. There are very strong links between school and parish.

Recommendations

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.

- Establish a robust system whereby all monitoring and evaluation of the RE curriculum and Catholic life feed into and become central to the overall school improvement plan.
- Ensure that the good practice evident in RE is sustained and developed alongside other key priorities.
- Evaluate and plan for greater in depth awareness of other faiths in order to promote peace and tolerance.