



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST CLARES CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 6th – 7th November 2012
Reporting Inspector Brenda Beale

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	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Barbara McPhillips
School address	Robert Road Handsworth B20 3RT
Telephone number	0121 554 3289
E-mail address	enquiry@stclare.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2010
DFE School number	330 3335
Unique Reference Number	103434

Headteacher (Executive) Mr Mark Humphries

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 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, staff, and parish priest. She attended Mass observed a class liturgy 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 subject leadership, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Clare's is a large Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Francis of Assisi in Handsworth, Birmingham. The school is in area of high social deprivation. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 22%. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 98%. Mobility plays a significant part in the school due to location and social context. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is high; 20% of the children have special needs and/or disabilities. For three quarters of the pupils over 5 years, English is a second language. Attainment on entry is well below the national average.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation the school judges that its Catholic life and RE are predominantly good or better. The school judges that attainment in RE is good. The school further maintains that the way in which the subject is monitored and evaluated is thorough and leads to improvement. These judgements are wholly reliable. The school has been through a period of change and unsettled leadership but the RE leader and key members of staff have ensured that not only the quality of RE but also all aspects of the Catholic life of the school have remained secure and have continued to develop and improve. There is now a new but experienced leadership team in place who consider the Catholic life of the school as key to further development.

School self evaluation

Currently the strength of school self evaluation in terms of its Catholic ethos lies in the subject leader's thorough and accurate knowledge of the school. She is painstaking and meticulous in her monitoring and evaluation of RE and has been thorough in gathering evidence and information about the Catholic life of the school. Although the monitoring of some aspects of the Catholic life of the school has been less formal, practices remain strong and the pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development is very good. She has taken a reflective approach and is able to demonstrate improvements that have occurred. Attainment and progress have been judged to be good across both Key Stage 1 and 2 and this judgement is substantially sound because it is rooted in thorough monitoring and assessment procedures. Work in books and pupil response in lessons and assessment rightly indicate that pupils make good progress and attain well in both Key Stage 1 and 2. During

inspection Key Stage 2 pupils were able articulate very clearly a high level of understanding in RE. The Key Stage 1 pupils' ability to articulate their knowledge was less certain, even taking into account the age difference. This may well be attributed to the fact that for many pupils English is a second language and that the older pupils have gained greater skill in this area.

Teaching and learning have been monitored effectively and the subject leader has fostered and encouraged good practice but has not shied away from delivering harder messages that have been needed for improvement. The subject leader's findings on lesson observations, book trawls and learning walks are wholly consistent with those from inspection. The evaluation of the RE curriculum is very thorough and the subject leader along with the staff are always seeking ways to enrich and develop opportunities for children to learn. The school has not yet fully addressed the provision of family life and sex education. The school has taken full advantage of the multicultural character of its pupils and wider community to enrich the curriculum.

The way in pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is judged through self evaluation to be outstanding and this is carefully evidenced and apparent. Pupil response to collective worship has been monitored and evaluated and rightly judged by the school to be outstanding. The school considers that provision for collective worship is good. The subject leader has taken a reflective approach and worship is regularly reviewed and improved. Plenty of opportunity is provided for pupils to pray and worship in both their classrooms, the hall and the dedicated chapel but, because many children are from other faiths or are not from practising families, they need greater access to the Mass responses in order to help them participate more fully. The school has the technology and skills to provide this facility.

The Catholic life of the school is regularly discussed and evaluated by the headteacher, senior leadership team and RE leader throughout the academic year using evidence monitoring, pupil interviews, learning walks and consultation with RE advisor, school governors and parish priest. The RE leader monitors planning every term and timetables for the RE entitlement, carries out book trawls twice a year and lesson observations annually. The outcomes of these evaluations are shared with senior leadership and individual teachers. Strengths and good practice are identified and shared with the whole staff. Key areas of weakness are also brought to the attention of the whole staff and individual teachers. RE professional development and action planning are based on evidence from these evaluations.

There is strong spiritual direction from the governing body, and the parish priest. The governors take the Catholic ethos of the school very seriously and challenge and support leaders to ensure that this Catholic ethos is at the centre of school life. Governors are involved in monitoring and evaluation through receiving reports from the headteacher and RE leader. The designated RE governor visits the school regularly to become familiar with provision. Governors attend celebrations such as Masses, plays and assemblies. Some foundation governors support in classes during lessons that include RE.

The new senior leadership team comprising executive headteacher, head of school, deputy headteacher and other key members are putting in place systems and procedures to sharpen and more keenly focus the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of school life. All members of staff understand that they are responsible for the Catholic Life of the school and the spiritual development of the children within it.

The current subject leader is taking over the role of phase leader and in order to ensure continued improvement she will head up a RE and Catholic life team which will sit within the senior management structure. Currently the school has a good capacity to improve

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Children enter the Foundation stage with low levels of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith; this demonstrated through baseline assessment in RE carried out first few weeks of entry to the Reception class. The children are re-assessed in summer term and the results show that children can identify key symbols, figures and prayers of the Church. At the end of Key Stage 1 2011-12 assessment data shows that 82% of children are working at or above the average expectations. At the end of Key Stage 2 2011-12 assessment data shows that 83% of children are working at or above the average expectations. Pupil interviews, lesson observations and pupil feedback all indicate that children enjoy RE and are motivated and enthusiastic about religious expression through prayer and celebration. The majority of children with additional needs are making good progress and achieve at least satisfactory attainment. When children with SEN do not attain so well, it is usually in areas of RE where the concepts are complex.

The way in which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The pupils' attitudes, values, relationships and commitment to the school community demonstrate that their spiritual, moral and vocational development is outstanding. Children are keen to take on responsibilities. They have a strong sense of fairness and value and respect each other and understand the importance of forgiveness in relationships. Pupils have a strong sense of vocation and service. Children's response to and participation in collective worship is outstanding. Children act with reverence during Mass and collective worship; they sing joyfully, reflect silently, and join in community prayers. They take an active part in Masses by reading the scriptures and bidding prayers and bringing up the offerings. Children are actively involved in planning and preparation for class or year group assemblies which are based on a religious or moral theme. Children show respect for each other's beliefs and children of all beliefs are confident to pray in St Clare's' School. Children are aware of different ways of praying. There is a big take up for voluntary lunch time prayers.

Teaching is good because teachers mostly have sound subject knowledge, this evidenced in book trawls and lesson observations. Where teacher knowledge is not as strong, the RE leader and key teachers support colleagues to acquire knowledge and skills through planning and discussion. The RE leader is actively involved in identifying professional development opportunities for all staff. Pupils enjoy RE because teachers and other adults use a range of imaginative teaching strategies and range of learning styles. There is a clear progression of knowledge and understanding. Planning includes evidence of differentiation for children with additional needs through support, tasks and recording methods and also it provides challenge for the more able. A very good range of resources are used in the teaching and learning of RE. Assessment is good and supports learning. Children know how well they are doing because learning objectives are shared with them and they are clear about what they need to do to succeed in RE lessons.

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 RE curriculum is based on the diocesan *Curriculum Strategy* and is modified to take account of the learning needs and interests of groups of children. The curriculum is enhanced through use of resources and expertise in and beyond the school. Children and their families who are preparing for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation participate in workshops and retreats in St Mary's Convent, St Francis' Parish and in school. These are planned and delivered jointly by the school and parish. The provision of collective worship is good. Collective worship in classrooms is an integral part of the school day. Whole school assemblies are held on Monday mornings: they are based on the liturgical year or special Feast days. In addition to regular Masses, assemblies and prayer services special liturgies take place during Holy Week, Lent and Advent.

St Clare's is a good Catholic school in which all pupils and their families benefit and thrive. It is a school that respects the faiths of all its pupils but is uncompromising in making Christ known to all in the community it serves.

Recommendations

- Formalise the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life of the school so that it can better inform the school development plan.
- Review and fully implement a family life and sex education programme in line with Catholic teaching.
- Using the technology available ensure that all pupils have full access to Mass and increase participation by introducing new Mass settings