



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

SS JOHN & MONICA CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL Birmingham

Inspection dates 11th - 12th November 2013
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

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	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Maria O'Halloran
School address	Chantry Road Moseley B13 8DW
Telephone number	0121 464 5868
E-mail address	head@stjonmon.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	October 2008
DFE School number	330/3410
Unique Reference Number	103478

Headteacher Mrs Eileen Walker

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 4 RE lessons. 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 chair of governors and the parish priest. He observed a whole school assembly, an Early Years prayer service, 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 and teachers' planning. 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

SS John and Monica is an average size Catholic primary school situated in Moseley but with a catchment area mainly in Balsall Heath, serving the parish of SS John and Martin. The school lies half a mile from the parish church. There are 210 pupils on roll, of whom 13.2% are Catholic. Pupils come from mixed backgrounds but the socio-economic deprivation indicators for the area are almost double the national. There are above average numbers of children with special needs, English as an additional language (70%), and eligible for free school meals. The headteacher is at present overseeing another school while SS John and Monica has an acting head. There is also a new RE subject leader. Pupils' prior Christian religious knowledge is below expected levels.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation, SS John and Monica School judges itself to be an outstanding school. The evidence gathered from the inspection amply validates this judgement. It is a remarkably multi-faceted, inclusive school, with an openness to all, and recognising the image of God in every single individual, regardless of background or belief. All pupils benefit enormously from, and contribute, with a willing commitment and involvement, to every area of school life, and consequently to its vibrant Catholic ethos. Their response to the excellent provision for collective worship is good. The provision and outcomes from the religious education programme, both teaching and learning, are outstanding. The support and critical challenge from the governors is very effective, partnering the outstanding and inspiring leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team. They have captured the school in close detail in their self evaluation document through well embedded robust, accurate and reliable processes, which drive forward planning with clear, measurable goals and objectives.

School self evaluation

The school uses effective self evaluation procedures in a quite exemplary manner, through frequent reviews and reflection on its current practice, for example, annual audits of the quality of Catholic life and ethos, and through very effective strategic planning for religious education, which is evaluated in detail. It can demonstrate examples of this effectiveness, for instance, the successful reflective monitoring of classroom worship which led to better practice or the impact of leadership and management on school improvement. The recent parent questionnaire was a very valuable touchstone with which to evaluate the impact of the measures for improvement the school has taken. The governors and senior leadership recognise the vital importance of encouraging frequent feedback and reflection on the

school's mission, the re-vision of which is continuous, and involves all the pupils, as well as staff, parents and governors, feeding back formally three times a year.

The outstanding teaching and learning of RE is monitored regularly through subject review, lesson observations, learning walks and book trawls by the headteacher and link governor for RE. These are programmed and carried out precisely, with discernible impact on improved performance and outcomes throughout the school. The emphasis on learning from religion is a real strength of the RE curriculum and schemes of work, and results in pupils having a secure grasp of what it means in their daily lives, and evident in their excellent behaviour and attitudes towards others. The curriculum is balanced and accessible to all pupils. It effectively provides pupils with a growing insight into the life and message of Jesus as well as the central beliefs that Catholics hold, and the link between belief and action. Pupils are given many opportunities to exercise their generosity and they do organise much charity work in the local community and beyond. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of other major religions is widened by the rich diversity of faith backgrounds of the pupils and their families, while looking and reflecting on life through the prism of the Catholic Faith.

The subject leadership of RE is an exemplar of outstanding practice which was well established previously by the present acting headteacher. The newly appointed RE subject leader has brought a fresh dimension to the subject. A clear programme of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, together with lesson observation and close scrutiny of written work has raised the bar in terms of expectation and outcomes, and resulted in rapid progress and high expectation of teacher's approach to RE. Both pupils and teachers know exactly what is needed to secure improvement and deepen understanding of the Faith. The headteacher reports back to the governors on Catholic Life and RE, while the RE subject leader feeds back to the senior leadership team and the governing body on a regular basis. Through the close involvement of the link governor and the ethos committee, there is a clarity and awareness of every area that requires any or further improvement. Action points are drawn up after every analysis, solutions are identified and effective focus is put where it is needed. This has led to increasing staff awareness of objectives, such as the very successful emphasis on the importance of teaching for meaning, and the tracking of every single pupil which is evident in terms of progress over time seen in the pupils' written work as well as their confidence in talking about their learning.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for pupils in RE are outstanding, closely linked to the excellent quality of the teaching they receive. Pupils' base assessment scores in RE indicate prior knowledge and religious experience to be low. Pupils make very rapid progress in the Foundation classes so that by the end of Key Stage 1 they are meeting expected attainment levels. There is good, solid progress in Year 3 and Year 4, accelerating in Year 5 and Year 6, so that by the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is high and a significant majority are making more than expected progress given their low starting points. Pupils are able to speak with confidence about their learning in RE and have a good grasp of the main tenets of the Faith and the significance and efficacy of prayer. The feedback from pupils in the autumn term indicated that they enjoyed their learning and the engagement in RE lessons. They comment particularly on the positive effect the use of music, drama, art and the exploration of other faiths have on their learning. Pupils with particular learning needs are well catered for and make the same excellent progress as the others. The teaching is making good headway in encouraging independent, peer and group learning so that the pupils are becoming more enthusiastic and motivated learners. They are unanimous in saying they enjoy 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.

and appreciate that they have the opportunity to feedback to their teachers on how best they learn in lessons. Their positive behaviour in lessons and around the school contributes much to their learning.

The pupils through their time at SS John and Monica absorb and internalise the attitudes and values inspired by the message of Jesus. They well understand the connection between these and how they should act towards others and behave in their own lives. They are quick to praise, to thank and to forgive. Every pupil regardless of faith, or none, feels a valued member of the school community, and participates reverently in prayer and liturgy. All pupils are familiar with the mission statement and can interpret it for their own lives because they are given that opportunity at the start of every year. They make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school through pupil voice and know that their feedback does make a difference. The school council is proactive and invited into the school's decision-making process.

Pupils' response to prayer invitations and the rich provision is good, with an enthusiastic participation in liturgies and assemblies and opportunities for prayer. They are beginning to take the lead in planning and presenting their own class assemblies, as well as being willing servers, readers and singers at Mass in the parish church. There is room to develop further their skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies and becoming animators in the school as they get older. Prayer is undoubtedly an important part of their daily lives, and not only in school but increasingly in their own home family setting and in the parish. They pray well, even the youngest - as in the early years prayer time - and their own prayers reflect their growing maturity and understanding. They sing with enthusiasm and feeling. Their response chimes well with the school's own self evaluation and demonstrates their growing ownership of Catholic life and the school's vibrant life of prayer and worship. They are more than willing to take full ownership of the liturgy and its planning from the start.

Provision for RE is outstanding, with consistently good teaching and much that is outstanding. On entry, pupils who have little prior knowledge become very quickly acquainted with key ideas about the Catholic Faith. A baseline assessment is established from which the progress of every individual child can be tracked. The best teaching involves the pupils fully in their own learning and encourages independent and peer work. They do the work, the teacher skilfully steers and shapes their learning through questioning that probes for understanding. Teachers are aware that their subject knowledge needs to be constantly deepened through supportive training and Inset in order to allow pupils, especially the more able, to achieve their full potential. Courses attended are then referenced in the headteacher's reports to the governing body. Teaching assistants working with individual pupils provide feedback to the teacher so that individual learning needs can be better met. Lesson planning is effective because it takes account of prior learning particularly in the case of setting lesson objectives, which target the learning needs and abilities of individual pupils. The effective review of outcomes has highlighted a need to introduce work sampling at the end of each unit, and to sharpen the current whole school moderation of work samples assessment and levelling. The marking of written work is proving an effective tool to show pupils how they can improve and creates a formative dialogue between teacher and pupil

Assessment procedures are embedded and provide for the close tracking of individual progress, with teachers becoming increasingly confident in assessment using the level indicators. They are becoming adept at using the diocesan assessment grids and the 'driver' verbs to challenge pupils' thinking and responses. For instance, all classes have "Intelligent Question" working walls, which encourage pupils to ask a variety of difficult questions which are addressed by their teachers, who are incidentally put on their mettle to

steer subsequent discussion. This is leading to the better use of pupil data to form more challenging lesson objectives and teaching strategies, and its impact over time is already becoming evident.

The curriculum is broad, balanced, closely linked to the Diocesan Strategy, and accessible to all. The new relationships programme is in line with Catholic guidelines. Staff are increasingly aware of the importance and place of learning from religion, and the need to incorporate it as a focus in all their lesson planning. Catholic teaching is approached in a cross curricular way so that all subjects provide opportunities to make valuable connections.

The school builds on its links with other faiths, and plans to invite more representatives to the school, so that pupils can develop their understanding of the Catholic faith and that all gain insight into the contrasts and similarities with other people and cultures around the world. As a result, pupils can speak with good understanding and respect for the similarities and differences between religions. School and parish work closely together to run the well planned and fruitful sacramental preparation programmes which provide such an evident impetus within the RE curriculum.

The quality of the provision for collective worship is good. The well planned liturgies follow the Church's liturgical year, and are echoed by some excellent displays in classrooms and around the school, and traditional Catholic practices such as the Rosary in October and Stations of the Cross, and reconciliation during Advent and Lent. There is a weekly Mass and opportunity for prayer and quiet reflection in the prayer garden. IT is used effectively both in lessons and assemblies to colour and flesh out the topics and themes. Links with the parish and involvement in parish life are strong. All aspects of collective worship are accessible to all pupils irrespective of their faith background, and formally monitored for range and greater impact.

Recommendations

Provide increased opportunities for all pupils to take more ownership of planning their own liturgies and assemblies.