



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST AMBROSE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL KIDDERMINSTER

Inspection dates 10th-11th July 2012
Reporting Inspector Teresa Quick

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Deacon Peter Hesketh
School address	Leswell Street Kidderminster DY10 1RP
Telephone number	01562 823568
E-mail address	office@st-ambrose.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2009
DFE School number	885/3393
Unique Reference Number	131400

Headteacher Mrs Marie Yates

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 2 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 vice-chair of governors and parish link governor, staff, and parish priest. She observed a prayer service, attended Mass 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 school development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about the Religious Education and Catholic Ethos Committee and its impact on the raising of standards, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

St Ambrose is an average-sized Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Ambrose, Kidderminster. Pupils come from the town of Kidderminster and the surrounding areas. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 90%. The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is about a quarter of the pupils. The largest group is from the Polish community. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average, so too are the numbers with special needs and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average overall.

Main Finding

In its self evaluation the school judges that its Catholic life and religious education are good. The school's judgements about the quality of its Catholic life and pupils' spiritual, moral, and vocational development are wholly reliable. Collective worship was judged as satisfactory. This is an underestimation of the good work of the school and its evident progress since the time of the last inspection. Since the last inspection significant progress in all areas of Catholic life has been made. This progress was founded on effective monitoring and evaluation processes and closely linked to improvement planning. These processes are being employed effectively to bring about the development of the curriculum and the teaching and learning in religious education. Children's knowledge and understanding of the faith is good for their age and abilities. The subject leadership is now strong and has good capacity to continue to raise attainment in RE. Pupils have a very positive attitude to their learning in religious education.

School self evaluation

Self evaluation at St Ambrose presents a predominantly accurate and realistic picture of where the school is in its Catholic life and religious education. The outcome of systematic processes for monitoring clearly focused on the impact of the work of the school is an awareness of the school's current position, and also the next steps towards further improvement. The processes are built on a thorough understanding of the mission of the school as part of the worldwide Church and the local church community and the school's role in educating the whole child. At the time of the last inspection it was recommended that the leadership and management of RE and Catholic life required strengthening. This was so that outcomes of monitoring have an impact on raising standards. Significant progress has been made and very good attention is now paid to the monitoring and evaluation outcomes of the Catholic life of the school. The processes the school adopts provide accurate information which the senior leaders use to make evaluations of the school's provision. At the time of the last inspection the school lacked strategic forward planning for RE and Catholic life which involved the governors fully in the process. An RE and Catholic Ethos

Committee has been formed composed of the priest, governors and the senior leadership team. The senior management have developed a range of monitoring activities to ensure all areas of Catholic life are robustly monitored, evaluated and reviewed including a termly Catholic ethos audit. The RE and Catholic Ethos Committee ensures that there is a rich, broad and balanced curriculum with spiritual development. As was also recommended links have been strengthened between assessment and planning for teaching and learning in RE to promote the steady and progressive development of knowledge and skills across the school and enable all children to achieve their full potential. Evaluation for the senior leaders is automatic. Nothing happens without consideration of its effectiveness. In order to improve further the governing body and the senior leadership team aim to ensure that pupils are explicitly given opportunity to build upon their understanding and knowledge and interpret "their existence in the light of God's plan", and to ensure pupils have sophisticated skills to articulate the school's distinctive mission and relate this to how they live out gospel values. Through staff meetings and training they ensure that all staff have an awareness and understanding of the Catholic life of the school and how subjects other than RE contribute to it. Collective worship was judged by the school as satisfactory. This is an underestimation of the quality of collective worship overall. While they have not embedded regular practice of pupils to prepare and lead collective worship, in other areas of collective worship pupils excel. From a young age pupils read at Mass, make the responses and sing well. They follow the actions of the priest and their behaviour is outstanding. There are a variety of different Masses and liturgical services for pupils and their parents. Prayer bags and heritage bags are implemented in each year group. Pupils know and understand some gospel values and how they relate to their daily lives. Collective worship is good with some outstanding features in the provision. There is an awareness of how subjects across the curriculum contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development. Governors especially those on the RE and Catholic Ethos Committee are fully aware of the Catholic life of the school and fulfil their responsibilities in its evaluation.

The relationship between self-evaluation and improvement planning is very good. Targets are based on the clear knowledge of the school's Catholic life by the senior leaders. They give the correct next steps at the stage at which the school finds itself. They are accompanied by clear understanding of their impact and actions and a regular review of progress towards them. Other findings from the self-evaluation are also given attention. In-service provision for staff and governors is provided for the development of areas of Catholic life. The whole process towards improvement is thorough, well thought through, regularly reviewed, and very effective in providing for the pupils.

The school judges the leadership of religious education to be good. There is evidence of a trend in rising achievement. The analysis of results is effective and is used to identify next stages in the development of learning. Lesson observations are very strong. Judgements are realistic and well evidenced. Hard messages in order to improve learning are given where appropriate. The judgement of teaching is that it is good. Areas of outstanding practice were seen with pupils developing towards being independent critical thinkers. There is excellent behaviour in lessons with pupils showing interest and excitement from the teaching. Pupils work collaboratively and tasks are open ended. Pupils' books are regularly monitored and show good content, work matching ability or specific support given. There is generally a clear match for quality and quantity between RE and the work in English. Differing writing styles are evident and interesting ways of recording learning. There is a consistency of marking being developed encouraging the development of individual pupils' learning. The curriculum is good: broad and balanced in most areas. An issue identified by the subject leader for further development is pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths. Future planning must take this into account. The time allocated each week for religious education meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and often more time will be allocated.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for pupils are generally above diocesan expectations. Pupils enter school with varying knowledge of prayer and the life of Jesus Christ. In Year 2 many pupils are working above the diocesan expectations. In Year 4 most pupils have a knowledge and understanding of the faith above what would be expected. In Year 6 standards are good with a number of pupils well above diocesan expectations. Pupils new to the school and those with English as a second language are not achieving as well as those who have been in the school for a long time and English is their home language. Pupils with English as a second language form 20% of the school population. There is well targeted support for these pupils.

The contribution of pupils to the Catholic life of the school and collective worship is good. They respond well to the many opportunities the school offers to them for their spiritual, moral and vocational development. Their attitude to the prayer life of the school is good. In Year 6 pupils are able to prepare and lead their collective worship. This has yet to become embedded across the school and for a wider audience. Pupils are able to translate the faith of the school into action on behalf of those in need in the local community and beyond. Plans to improve provision for collective worship are in place including the development of an area as a prayer room.

The senior leadership is committed to the Catholicity of the school. It is at the forefront of all that the school does. There is a strong Catholic ethos and a strong sense of purpose and direction. Governors are active in their support for the Catholic character of the school and are prominent with the headteacher and deputy headteacher in promoting it.

The leadership of RE within the school is strong. The subject leader supports teachers new to the school and leads established staff towards improvement in teaching and learning in RE. Monitoring and evaluation are strengths of the school leading to the raising of pupils' standards and general improvement in RE.

Teaching in religious education is good overall. The subject leader presents a good role model as a teacher of RE. Planning is good and assessment data is used effectively. Curriculum development is good. The weakness is known to be with the teaching about other faiths. The curriculum as a whole including religious education makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development. There are clear cross curricular links between RE and music, art, English, drama and ICT.

Recommendations

- Create more opportunities for children to plan a range of collective worship for their own class and then for a wider audience.
- Develop opportunities for the study of other faiths with visits to places of worship where possible.

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.



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July 2012

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, July 2012

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school is a good Catholic school. It is a Catholic school that has welcomed children who have come from other countries. There is a strong Catholic ethos where every member of the school community is valued and respected. The Catholic mission underpins all the school does. The children make good progress in their religious education and take an active part in the Masses and liturgies whether it is a reading, a prayer or singing. This is a harmonious community where children work and play happily together. The teachers encourage children to behave well both in class and around the school. The children are polite and welcoming. Teaching of RE is good. The teachers regularly review the teaching and what is learned in RE together with the Catholic life of the school to ensure that your children receive the best possible religious education. Governors are active in their support for the mission of the school.

The teachers have a comprehensive development plan for Religious Education. I have recommended that they create opportunities for your children to plan a range of collective worship for their class and then for a wider audience. They should also further develop opportunities for the study of other faiths with visits to their places of worship.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the school, being able to see your children at work, play and prayer. It was a privilege and pleasure to inspect this delightful school. The children and staff made me feel most welcome. The children are a credit to the school, to their families and those who care for them.

Yours sincerely

Teresa Quick
Diocesan Inspector