

Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

English Martyrs Catholic Primary School



St. Mark Street, Aldgate, E1 8DJ

Date of inspection: 03 February 2016

A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade 2

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education is good. The curriculum is clearly linked to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, (RECD). The governing body actively guides the provision in religious education. The link governor is a regular visitor, carrying out learning walks. She keeps the governing body fully informed, in partnership with the headteacher. There is good evidence of growing levels of religious literacy across the phases, particularly in relation to Catholic faith and tradition. The pupils across the phases are offered a varied and creative range of activities. The teaching in religious education is variable, where good examples included open-ended and probing questioning. The progress made by the pupils in religious education is moderated, tracked and evaluated against the levels of attainment in the agreed understandings. The leadership and management of religious education have been through a period of transition, due to absence over time.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade 1

The overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The excellent range of opportunities to participate in prayer and worship include the schedules for weekly Mass, and receiving the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation. The close and effective partnership between the school, home and parishes has been significant in widening the community links. Pupils are proactive in reaching out through a range of fundraising and support locally through their 'homeless programme,' nationally through the Catholic Children's Society and globally through CAFOD. Pupil ownership on discussion, planning and contribution to these worthwhile charities is worthy of note and an example of their growth in human flourishing. The governing body is fully aware of, dedicated and committed to their ecclesial responsibility in the Church's mission in education.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited 8 lessons and an assembly, and carried out 7 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of English Martyrs, Aldgate was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Mrs. Tina Cleugh	Lead Inspector
Ms Robina Maher	Associate Inspector

Description of School

This Voluntary Aided school is a one form entry in the LA of Tower Hamlets and the locality of Aldgate. The school serves the parish of English Martyrs, Tower Hill and St. Patrick's in Wapping. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 94%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 2.1% and from other Faiths 2.9%. The remaining proportion have not declared a faith. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 80%.

There are 236 pupils on roll, with 2 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above, average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Forty six pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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Headteacher:	Miss Bronagh Nugent
Chair of Governors:	Mr. Peter Edwards

Date of previous inspection:	October 2010
Previous Inspection grades:	I

Key for inspection grades:	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

The school has developed its system of pupil conferencing to guide pupils through their 'next steps' and to improve and aspire to the higher standards in religious education. The revision of the developmental marking policy has encouraged more pupil ownership on their levels of learning, whilst correcting errors and misconceptions. Parents are provided with a range of homework tasks. The school has installed a new electronic tracking system for religious education as that for other core subjects.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 2

The content of religious education is based on clearly planned links to the Curriculum Directory. The links are identified in the planned topics being delivered. The areas of study are identified and links made to the Sources of Revelation. These are also the focus in the growing skills of the pupils including effective use of the Bible. Pupils are also developing their skills in matching the sources of tradition, scripture, human experience and creation to their everyday lives. There is some evidence across the phases and by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are being encouraged to think and reason at a deeper level in religious education. This is supported by access to a range of resources and artefacts, providing creative learning opportunities.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 2

Pupil achievement in religious education is good overall. Where the lessons were good and the tasks challenging, there were also examples of extended writing and effective use of religious vocabulary. There were also good examples of links to the signs and symbols of the sacraments, the Trinity and from Advent to Christmas. The range of moderated samples available during the inspection indicates that although pupils are making progress, there needs to be more opportunity for open-ended questions to enable pupils to deepen their thinking and to share and develop their ideas. The senior leaders have also recognised the need to plan tasks which develop more independent learning and provide challenge especially for the more able. The coverage of the Liturgical Cycle is woven through the topics. This includes the younger pupils who are encouraged to make links with their faith. The school has implemented a secure tracking system, recording levels of learning to track progress over time. The range of stunning displays, both in classrooms, in the public areas and on the 'Doors of Mercy' for each classroom, portray the lives of their chosen 'saints' and their influence in the lives of the pupils today. Some further good examples were in some of the responses from pupils to the AT2, 'Learning from Religion,' 'Big Questions', with reflections such as '...I connected with God very fondly...I feel God is with me and within me...' These profound reflections, from the pupils across the age range, are typical of the influence from the adults both in the school and the parish communities. The scrutiny of the work in the books shows that differentiation is often by outcome and at times some of the work in the books is copied from given information. Tasks are often through closed activities which denies pupils the opportunity to extend their knowledge and understanding across the areas of study in religious education. The attitudes of the pupils in their learning is varied, where in some cases, learning opportunities were missed. The marking indicates

developmental comments which support the next stages in the learning. However, this is inconsistently applied.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

The overall typicality of teaching is good. Where teaching was strong, the pupils were encouraged to share their ideas, work collaboratively and extend their learning through well planned and probing questioning. In these cases, the pupils made effective links with Scripture, and their everyday life experiences. Where teaching was not so good, there was a lack of subject knowledge and at times misconceptions were not addressed which meant pupils had missed learning opportunities. Parents spoke about the range of homework which enables their children to develop their understanding of their faith and how it influences their lives. The weekly issue of the 'Wednesday Word' includes the follow-up activities carried out in the school. The religious literacy of the pupils is evident across the phases, with examples of references to prior learning increasing their levels of understanding. Teachers new to teaching in a Catholic school are supported by the school through in-house continuing professional development. Pupils are taught about other faiths and this is supported by planned visits from representatives of other faiths including Judaism and Islam. The use of drama, role play, ICT, music and dance inspires the creativity and enjoyment in their lessons in religious education. The assessment for learning process is developing and the teachers are moderating the levels of learning against the agreed understandings in the levels of attainment in religious education. This is also in partnership with the deanery network and provides some opportunities for modelling good practice.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The overall effectiveness of leadership and management in religious education is good. The school has experienced significant staff changes in recent years due to staff movement and some long term absence. As a result of their review of the leadership and management, the school has agreed to move forward through a team approach to the leadership and management of religious education. The headteacher, with her leadership team, has been overseeing the provision for religious education during this time. She has ensured that opportunities for and attendance at moderation of levels of learning and in-service and other training for teaching religious education, has been sustained. The designated governor for religious education is a regular visitor to the school and she ensures the governing body are kept informed in partnership with the headteacher.

What should the school do to improve further in classroom religious education?

- Deepen subject knowledge of staff, to support them in securing higher levels of learning in religious education. This will be through well planned, probing questioning
- Develop a whole school consistent approach to marking, which includes moving pupils forward in their next levels of learning in religious education
- Develop a systematic succession planning programme for leadership and management of religious education, through a team approach

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has established and developed strong and highly effective links and partnerships between the school and the parishes of English Martyrs, Aldgate and St. Patrick's, Wapping. The rich range of programmes promoting social justice and the Common Good include exploring the rights of the child, with for example, opportunities for pupils to realise and question the ethical works in Canary Wharf businesses. Their strategies include attaining Level 2 accreditation through the 'Rights Respecting' UNICEF programme. This empowers pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the world and the rights of children in their world, as a community of nations.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade I

The school fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales delivering 10% religious education weekly. Religious education is given due status and is woven through all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. This is also reflected in the generous budget allocation for all aspects including the resources and provision for religious education and the Catholic life of the school, which exceeds that for other core subjects. The governing body are pro-actively guiding and developing agreed strategies identified in the school development plan. The identified priorities for religious education in the development plan are succinctly linked to the termly evaluations by the governing body. The reference by the chair of the governing body to the inspectors endorsing 'religious education as the core of our curriculum' is borne out in the discussion with the priest and the governor responsible for religious education, who also met with the inspectors. Their corporate responsibility and dedication to the school over many years is an excellent example of their mission in the church. The leadership team and governing body acknowledge how much they highly value the wealth of knowledge and understanding in faith, ritual and tradition demonstrated by the pupils in school, during catechesis and sacramental parish events.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community.

Grade I

Prayer and worship are central in this outstanding school which provides varied and rich opportunities for pupils, staff and parents. The Catholic tradition is richly developed for pupils across the phases. They benefit from a wealth of liturgical celebrations, weekly Mass and the sacraments, including Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. The pupils are planning and leading class worship, using the diocesan toolkit. The leadership have recognised how this can now include planning, preparation and delivery of other worship events, including weekly assemblies, and where appropriate liturgical celebration. There is extensive evidence of how a variety of creative opportunities, support and enhance their prayer and worship through dance, role play drama, musical accompaniment and the joy of singing a wide repertoire of hymns. The 'Prayer Garden' with its central mosaic, is used regularly by the pupils for their planned acts of worship and their celebration of the seasonal changes and the wonder and awe of creation. The different chosen saints for their dedicated link on their 'Doors of Mercy', include the example of compassion by Jesus, such as in the parable of Zacchaeus. The pupils reflect upon the message from the parable to the spiritual

and corporal works of mercy. The parents spoke warmly and appreciatively of how the school works tirelessly to provide the pupils with their growing levels of knowledge and understanding of their faith and the Catholic tradition. They said how they themselves had 'learnt about their faith from their children' and how 'the school allows the children to experience nature through their prayers in the prayer garden.' They particularly expressed their gratitude for how their children demonstrate sincere empathy for the local homeless people. Another parent appreciates how, through the reverent prayer life her child experiences that she explained, 'I see Jesus as my friend through my deep relationship with him.' The Rosary is prayed daily during October and May and the pupils are confident to talk about the importance of prayer in their daily lives. They are offered many opportunities for spontaneous prayer, witnessed during the assembly observed and within the class prayer across the phases of the school.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.

Grade I

The commitment and contribution to social justice and the Common Good is outstanding. The high level of understanding of their stewardship of creation is visible through the year groups and during the inspection many examples were witnessed. The behaviour of the pupils across the school is exemplary, with smiling welcomes and friendly courteous manners. The weekly award assemblies celebrate the gifts and talents of the pupils and their achievements, including out of the classroom including sporting achievements. There is a range of dynamic and creative activities which empower the pupils to develop their human flourishing. They are able to take on responsibility for a range of dedicated witness to those less well off than themselves. An example of this is how each year group hold discussions to identify which aspect of the CAFOD programme they can adopt. An example of this is the goat for a village in India and how the pupils appreciate the importance of looking after others less well off than themselves. Two key local charities which are very generously supported by the pupils across the age range in the school, are the local 'Providence Row Homeless Shelter' and the 'Food Bank' in Poplar. Their empathy and respect for the most vulnerable members of their local community. This was endorsed by one of the parents who described it as how, her son's 'kindness and care for them touched me deeply.' The response to Pope Francis is actively encouraged and the Cardinal Nichols G8 summit for the 'Big Lesson' is being addressed through their UNICEF 'Rights Respecting' activities. The 'Ambassadors' spoke eloquently and proudly of their roles and responsibilities in these charitable works and in particular how on a day to day basis, 'they take very good care of each other.' They are making effective links to their responses in their call to justice and the common good to the theology underpinning their understanding. They make regular reference to 'what Jesus wants us to do' which is also displayed in the reflections on the 'doors of mercy' in all classrooms.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;

Grade I

The outstanding triple partnership between school, home and the two parishes, has grown considerably since the previous inspection. The parental questionnaire is overwhelmingly positive, which was affirmed by the group of parents who met the inspectors. They highly value the school, its nurture of their children's faith and spiritual development and the 'wonderful way the school brings the whole community of school, home and parish together.' The governing body knows and understands the school very well. They are fully committed to ongoing identified priorities and their

strategic responsibilities, including within the ecclesial family of the diocese, They attend diocesan in-service and the chair of governors keeps abreast of the guidance and regulations regularly through the Diocesan Bulletin. Their collaborative and clear direction and vision for the school is the driving force which impacts on the outstanding partnerships. This includes the deanery networks, where colleagues and members of the leadership team benefit from the expertise and experience in other Catholic schools. These links are actively encouraged, including for moderation and sharing models of good and excellent practice. Their generous allocation of funding annually provides a rich range of high quality resources, artefacts to celebrate the liturgical cycle and enhance provision in all aspects of religious education and the catholic life of the school.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Grade I

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The highly effective partnerships between the long serving and experienced governing body has empowered the school to continue to flourish as a Catholic school, The governing body is clear in its strategic direction and challenge to the school in partnership with the active support from the two parishes. Together they provide sustained and dynamic support to the school. The school's self-evaluation accurately outlines the key areas for ongoing improvement and development. The headteacher's termly reports keep the governing body fully informed and their active response, including through their regular visits to the school and their participation in the range of events and celebrations, is a hallmark of their dedication and commitment to Catholic life of the school. The headteacher, with her leadership team, embrace the challenges caused at present from staffing issues and have a clear and coherent future plan, which includes ongoing continuing professional development and wider networking with deanery, diocesan and local schools.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Continuing empowering pupils to prepare, plan and lead all worship across the phases, at age appropriate levels