



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST DUNSTAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

Inspection dates 22nd -23rd September 2010
Reporting Inspector Brenda Beale

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary
Age range of pupils	4 – 11 years
Number on roll	304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Fr Fitzpatrick
School address	Drayton Road Kings Heath Birmingham B14 7LP
Telephone number	0121 464 4648
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Date of previous inspection	March 2007
DCSF School Number	330/3363
Unique Reference Number	103455

Headteacher Mr J A Kenny

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 4 full religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning, students' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. She observed the school's work, including Mass and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in religious education (RE), and students' work.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average sized Catholic primary school in the parish of St Dunstan in Kings Heath in the city of Birmingham. There are 304 pupils on roll of whom 175 (57%) are baptised Catholics. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a significant number of children (38.2%) coming from minority ethnic backgrounds with 18.8% believed to have English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. The school enjoys strong links with Bishop Challoner Catholic Secondary School to which many of the pupils go at the end of their time in Year 6.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

St Dunstan's is an outstanding Catholic school. Whilst this school welcomes and respects pupils from a range of other faith backgrounds it has retained a strong Catholic ethos. Leadership and all members of staff truthfully demonstrate the living out of Christian values and virtues. In respect to the school's Catholic life the care and provision offered ensures the best possible outcomes for all the pupils. This is a school which at the time of inspection had recently experienced a very difficult period of considerable bereavement and loss but the care and support it extended as a community is a true testimony and witness to love of Christ. Pupils thrive in this caring secure environment and respond positively and confidently to the challenges with which they are presented. Therefore they make outstanding progress in RE and are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school. They have a strong sense that they are all equal in the eyes of God and full members of the whole school community. Pupils participate joyfully and respectfully in collective worship and prayer.

The quality of teaching in RE is very good with some that is outstanding. Planning is thorough and well considered and takes into account the various abilities and faith backgrounds of all the pupils. Assessment is thorough and informs planning thus impacting favourably on outcomes for pupils. The RE curriculum is very inclusive and enriched by liturgy, visits and speakers. All pupils' learning needs are met and they are well supported through careful deployment of staff. Pupils' high attainment is achieved by meticulous attention being given to the development of the whole child. Collective worship is carefully planned and delivered with equal attention being given to detail. The pupils and whole school community participate fully in the opportunities they are offered for prayer and worship.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. The headteacher and his deputy have developed a united and competent team committed to improving the quality of provision in terms of Catholic life and RE. The RE subject leader has an outstanding knowledge and commitment to her subject. All issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been dealt with effectively and the school has accurately identified its own areas for future development. Pupils, parents and staff are proud of their school and support the leadership in its constant quest for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupils' leadership within prayer and liturgy.
- Develop assessment to further identify progress and attainment made by various groups in the school community.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

All pupils make very good progress in RE. Baseline assessment reveals that many pupils enter the school with little knowledge of scripture or the Faith. The school is sensitive to the needs of all groups of learners which impacts considerably on the progress made across all key stages. Children of other faiths are encouraged to bring their own knowledge and spirituality to RE and other aspects of the Catholic life of the school. This enhances and enriches the experiences shared by all pupils. The pupils find their RE lessons interesting and enjoyable and speak positively about the support and encouragement they receive from all members of staff. Thus attainment is good across both key stages and particularly high in Years 5 and 6. At the end of Key Stage 1 children are familiar with the Bible and know that it is divided into two parts and they are able to name and recount several stories from both Old and New Testaments. They can talk with confidence about important events in the life of Jesus and understand the importance of the Resurrection. They know about Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter and know that the priest wears different colours at different times of the liturgical year. They are familiar with a range of traditional and school prayers and they understand why we pray: 'sometimes to say thank you, to say sorry, to ask for help or to praise God.' Pupils understand baptism. They know they are called to 'live like Jesus' and can talk at an age appropriate level as to what this means. By Year 6 pupils have a good knowledge of the Bible and can name books from both Testaments. They not only know many more scripture stories and they can reflect upon their meaning and relevance to their own lives. This and the whole ethos of the school does impact upon the way they behave and the decisions they make. They have a wider knowledge of traditional prayers and excellent evidence was seen of their own writing of prayers. They are comfortable with prayer and said they found meditations beneficial. They can talk about artefacts and understand their symbolism. They are very familiar with the seasons of the liturgical year and the related colours. They have a good knowledge of the Sacraments.

Pupils contribute very well to and benefit greatly from the Catholic life of the school. Pupils spoke often during inspection about the importance of respect for all people and they demonstrate a sense of compassion with and concern for others. They respond well to the affirmation they receive and they enjoy the incentives they are given to behave well. Behaviour is exceptionally good. They know they are loved by God and the importance of forgiving and being forgiven. Their successes are joyfully celebrated and they take pleasure in each other's success. They express their beliefs with confidence and whatever their faith background they respect the values and virtues of the Catholic Faith. Their spiritual and moral development is outstanding. The older children take responsibility for the younger children in Key Stage 1. Vulnerable pupils benefit greatly from the outstanding support they receive from all staff but in particular from a playground mentor, who according to one pupil, 'can solve anything'. Another pupil stated that 'you are always safe in this school'. The prayer and worship life of the school clearly reinforces the trust and respect the children have towards each other and the adults in the school.

Pupils' response to collective worship is very good. In the Mass that was celebrated during inspection the children sang with joy and gusto and are familiar with a wide repertoire of hymns. Pupil readers and contributors were confident and clear. The children listened to the homily attentively and were very responsive to the priest's questions. The children were very respectful and reflective as they were during all class and communal prayer observed during inspection. They have a good knowledge of formal prayer and are able to write sensitive meaningful prayers. Pupils take part in daily class prayer. They show reverence and respect when praying collectively and during quieter moments of reflection. They lead class Masses in school which follow the liturgical year and lead First Friday Masses in the parish church. Pupils engage in weekly key stage prayer and liturgy services. Pupils interviewed said that they enjoy these services, in which they listen, respond and pray. Some pupils take part in the voluntary Rosary prayer which is led by members of the parish during break time. All pupils take part in the week of Lenten assemblies. These are jointly prepared between a Foundation/Key Stage 1 class and a Key Stage 2 class. Head and deputy headteacher led assemblies often involve pupils dramatizing aspects of the story which pupils enjoy. There is little evidence of worship being organised by the children but they do help to prepare

liturgies and actively participate in them. The prayer and collective worship of the school has done much support and sustain pupils during a period of grief and loss.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school.

Leaders and managers are extremely successful in developing the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher and his deputy are dedicated to providing an outstanding Catholic life that will benefit all pupils and are constantly seeking ways to improve provision. Many of the Christian values and attitudes evident in the school emanate from the headteacher who is an active, positive and calm presence in the school. He has created a united committed workforce that is encouraged to share ideas be fully involved in the development of the Catholic life of the school. Parent and pupil views, gathered through questionnaires and interviews, inform future planning and development. Leadership also places importance on looking outside the school and being informed by other professionals about their best practice. Leadership is skilled in monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Catholic life of the school which leads to development that provides very good outcomes for pupils.

The RE leader provides excellent leadership and management of her subject. She is very thorough and reflective in her approach. She links the liturgical, worship and prayer life of the school very closely with the RE curriculum. The curriculum and how it impacts on the outcome for pupils is under continual review. She is very knowledgeable and demonstrates a real passion for her subject. RE is monitored through book trawls, lesson observations and pupil interviews. The outcomes of these are discussed at staff meetings to promote the continuance of good practice and the development of further improvements. She attends cluster group meetings and training days at the RE Department to keep up to date with developments. Information from these is fed into staff meetings and INSET days. She has established sound assessment procedures which she keeps under review. She is respected by staff and provides support and guidance to ensure good practice and professional development.

The governing body provides both support and challenge and is dedicated to providing the best possible outcomes for pupils in respect to the school's Catholic life. They know how well the school is doing through the headteacher's report to governors, the work of the sub-committees and by monitoring and less formal visits to the school. Governors attend school events and many are closely linked to the parish. The parish/school liaison governor is very well informed about the Catholic life of the school and she does much to ensure strong links between school and parish. The chair of governors, who is also the parish priest, maintains excellent informal communications with the headteacher and other members of staff. The governors completely fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. The chair of the governors is supportive of newly arrived Catholic families to the area and is proactive in supporting applications to the parish secondary school. The governing body presents a united front with the school in communications with parents but is swift to deal effectively with the very few complaints that receive.

Community cohesion is outstanding. The strong Catholic ethos promotes a vision that is shared in the school where, as one Islamic pupil put into words, 'we are all equal and know we are loved by God'. This is a school where all pupils feel valued and where they feel their differences are respected. Weekly newsletters, events notices, the live channel screen and text messaging all serve to inform parents of events in the life of the school. Parents are invited to class assemblies, Masses, Christmas productions, musical recitals and parent evenings, all of which are well attended. The parent and family link worker provides information which promotes the well being of the children and families. A Polish support worker works with the Polish children who are learning the English language. The school successfully celebrates the cultures and understands the faiths of the ethnic minorities in its community. Pupils and parents of other beliefs feel entirely included in liturgies, Masses and assemblies. The school enjoys very strong links with Bishop Challoner Catholic Secondary School. The deputy headteacher visits Dame Ellen Pinsent Special each Monday and teaches Catholic liturgy to children with severe special needs; she also prepares these children to receive the Sacraments. There is an extremely strong link between school and parish;

the parish and school enjoy many shared activities. The RE co-ordinator liaises with the music co-ordinator, teachers from St Alban's school and the choir leader from St Dunstan's Church in the preparation of Sacramental Masses. Lenten fundraising supports the Good Shepherd Appeal and the Rwandan Appeal. The PTA is supporting pupils from St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School who are taking part in a World Challenge Project Appeal to rebuild a school in Africa. Through a senior management visit to Chicago, links have been made with pupils from Our Lady of the Snow Catholic School.

The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

The teaching of RE is very good with a predominance of outstanding lessons observed during inspection. Pupil interviews and book trawls indicate that pupils are experiencing good quality lessons, which are well planned and effectively delivered using a range of teaching styles and activities. Lessons observed were engaging, interesting, motivating and enjoyable. Excellent behaviour and very good relationships between staff and pupils facilitate good learning opportunities for pupils. Teachers have high expectations and their subject knowledge is good. Interactive whiteboards are used very effectively and are an invaluable resource for both pupils and teachers. Marking is consistently good and at its best includes encouraging comments and suggestion for improvement.

Assessment is thorough, informative and effective. Formal procedures are in place and regularly reviewed by the subject leader and the staff. The school uses the processes and procedures advocated by the Birmingham Archdiocese RE Department. Pupil interviews, plenary activities and when marking is at its best all clarify pupil progress and contribute to an overall picture of pupil progress. Informal questioning at the beginning of lessons gives teachers an indication of pupils' current level of understanding. Pupils are able to talk accurately about their work and progress. Assessment of pupil progress and attainment is assisted by pupils' own confidence, openness and willingness to respond readily to questions.

The curriculum provision is very good. The time allocation for RE meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the curriculum fulfils the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*. The pupils follow the *Diocesan Strategy for Religious Education* which has been customised to meet the needs of groups and individuals. The curriculum is enriched by visits to Christian and other faith places of worship, guest speakers and the involvement in fundraising and its purpose. The liturgical and worship life, seasonal assemblies and celebrations further enrich the curriculum. The school takes full advantage of its multi-faith population to ensure that all pupils have a good knowledge of and respect for other faiths. The SEAL programme has been customised for use in a Catholic school and is used very effectively as part of the children's social and moral education. At the time of inspection the school was taking full advantage of the visit to the United Kingdom of Pope Benedict XVI. When questioned, a reception child said she was making 'a sparkly Pope Benedict's hat'; Key Stage 2 had many displays depicting the visit and the life and beatification of the Blessed John Henry Newman. The school was strewn with white and gold bunting displaying the Papal emblem. Sacramental preparation is very thorough and carried out in partnership with the parish. Great emphasis is placed on sharing this preparation with parents. Parents of Year 6 pupils are invited to school to support the planning of Confirmation preparation Masses. The school uses the diocesan *All that I Am* family life and sex education programme. Again parents are involved and the programme is delivered in Years 5 and 6.

Provision for collective worship is very good. Pupils are given the opportunity to experience various types of prayer. Pupils take part in daily class prayer where they are encouraged to show reverence and respect when praying collectively and during quieter moments of reflection. There are regular class Masses in school which follow the Liturgical year and First Friday Masses in the parish church. Weekly key stage prayer and liturgy services take place. Pupils interviewed said that they enjoy these services, in which they listen, respond and pray. Some pupils attend voluntary Rosary prayer sessions which are led by members of the parish during break time. All pupils take part in the week of Lenten assemblies. These are jointly prepared between a Foundation/Key Stage 1 class and a Key Stage 2 class. Head and deputy headteacher lead assemblies often involve pupils

dramatising aspects of the story. Photographic evidence demonstrated that the children have experienced a variety of liturgies and assemblies and are very familiar with the liturgical year. The school is has a rich resource of good quality artefacts, there are high quality prayer focus areas in every class and excellent displays, all of which support the worship life of the school.

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