

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Merry Hill Rd, Bushey, Herts, WD23 1SU

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 8 November 2017



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- There is steady progress in enabling pupils to show understanding of what they are learning in religious education.
- The school is teaching with integrity a curriculum which stems from the Bishops' Conference Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- Pupils show good knowledge and skills in their understanding of the Scriptures.
- Progress and achievement in religious education is good, but pupils need more opportunities to record their insights and knowledge in writing.
- Teaching in religious education classes is special. Teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- There is very good differentiation in the planning and delivery of religious education, ensuring most pupils are helped to take their next steps.
- The leadership has been effective in maintaining standards in religious education during periods of staffing change.
- The management of religious education by the senior leadership team and its oversight by the governors have been focused and always in place.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Some pupils are not sufficiently aware of how to progress to the next level in religious education.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils in religious education to write down what they have learned.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Religious education is effective at the core of the curriculum.
- The school fully complies with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference by giving at least 10% of classroom curriculum time to religious education.
- The role of music makes a very important contribution to the Catholic life of the school.
- The experience the pupils have of prayer and liturgy is comprehensive.
- The pupils respond in assemblies to moments of awe and wonder.
- The pupils are confident in writing prayers and preparing liturgies, though they need more opportunities for spontaneous prayer.
- Both the understanding of why the needs of the poor are central to followers of Christ and the generosity and vigour with which the school raises money for charitable needs are outstanding.
- The headteacher and the senior leadership team are tireless in ensuring that Catholic life is the priority of the school.
- There is a very good partnership between the parents, the school and the parish.
- The parish priest plays a very important role in the school, both with the pupils and in the governing body.
- The governors are clear and committed in their governance of the school that its Catholic life is of prime importance.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous report suggested two areas for improvement: Firstly to agree and develop a fuller understanding of the national Levels of Attainment to ensure staff plan assessment tasks which enable pupils to show understanding and secondly to continue to support and develop staff subject knowledge of religious education as they use diocesan materials to plan and teach. The school has made progress in respect of tasks which enable pupils to show understanding but this is still work in progress. The school has made good progress on staff development. The additional complementary religious education (RE) programme that is under consideration will ensure there is consistent whole staff subject knowledge development.

The content of classroom religious education is good

In the course of the inspection it was clear that the content of religious education is good. The school conforms to the requirements of the Bishops' Conference approved Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). The teachers showed they know the RECD and ensured its coverage was in place. The addition of further material in the form of Caritas in Action will give enhanced knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching. The use of the Bible was a strength in the classroom both in the pupils' familiarity with looking up passages and in their knowledge of a number of texts. This stems from the RE materials in use in the school which looks to an enhanced approach to scriptural learning and application to life. The teaching of other world religions is appropriate and thorough and the school has developed a program of activities and visits related to them. Religious literacy on the part of both the teachers and the pupils is reflective and evaluative. This enabled the introduction of Big Question moments and discussions to be effective.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupils' attitudes to learning, including individual work, group and whole class work are consistently positive. Presentation of work and the pupils' books demonstrate the high esteem in which religious education is held. Attainment and progress will improve significantly when there is more focus on learning objectives, further developing religious literacy. Progress will also follow when lessons are conducted with greater pace. This religious literacy on the part of the pupils will be further enhanced with a more consistent approach to developmental marking. Orally the pupils' understanding of their faith is good but there is limited evidence in their workbooks. Further development is needed to enable pupils to know how they can raise their achievement in RE. The pupils enjoy talking about what they learn in RE and show insight into issues that their learning raises.

The quality of teaching is good

'Religious education lessons are special', one pupil said. All teaching staff create a positive atmosphere for learning. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils. Lesson were planned and differentiated tasks set. In the light of the classes having more than one year group, the confident use of differentiated tasks was particularly important and was evident. Good use was made of stilling activities. Pupils are beginning to move away from passive learning to active learning. Opportunities were given to pupils to respond – for example good use of post-its in one class to enable all pupils to respond to prior learning. Some pupils were able to demonstrate increasing depth and understanding of key religious concepts. Learning intentions are not always clear in planning and teaching, so pupils did not always make expected progress. For pupils to develop further their knowledge and understanding lessons need to be less teacher driven and greater opportunities given to allow pupils to record their ideas.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

The leadership and management of religious education are good. The past few years have seen changes in staffing and periods when the deputy head was also carrying the role of acting RE coordinator. These arrangements worked well. The RE co-ordinator was absent at the time of the inspection and the new headteacher works closely with the deputy head to maintain the sound leadership and management of RE which has been the hallmark of the recent years. There is a good understanding of what is required to raise the standard of the quality of teaching. Maintenance of the tracking of pupil progress and the monitoring of the quality of teaching has been kept in place. The governing body have shown keen concern regarding the maintenance and development of religious education and have steadily supported the leadership of the subject. Resources to continue to develop religious education have been made available.

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

- Consolidate and take forward the plans for further religious education resources.
- Improve pupils' awareness of levels of attainment so that they know what the next step is to improve further.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to record their ideas and responses, enabling teaching to be more pupil driven.
- Focus on improving clarity and precision of learning intentions in each individual lesson.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous inspection suggested one area for improvement - pupils should be given additional opportunities to write and include their own prayers in liturgical celebrations. The school has provided the pupils with additional opportunities to write and include their own prayers. Pupils write the bidding prayers for their class Mass. In the last few years the school has experienced a number of occasions of significant loss and the pupils have been involved in prayer services during which they both read prayers they had written and prayed spontaneously in their own words.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Religious education is effectively at the core of the curriculum. The school complies with the policy of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in giving at least 10% of classroom curriculum time to religious education. The budget for RE is always on a par with other core subjects and sometimes exceeds them. The role of music makes an important contribution to the Catholic life and religious education at Sacred Heart, both in school's liturgies and celebrations and in the wider outreach of the school, both to local charities as well as Masses at Westminster Cathedral where the school's musicians provide the musical accompaniment. The parent and parish partnership share and serve the vision that religious education is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils take home the Wednesday Word so families have the opportunity to prepare for next Sunday's Gospel. Excellent displays with religious insights are seen throughout the school – pupils delighted in showing the inspectors sayings and quotes that really meant something to them. The chair of governors and the parish priest are both very active in the life of the school and serve to emphasise the foundational place of religious education at the core of the curriculum.

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

is outstanding

Pupils' spiritual and moral development are very well provided for through time for quiet reflection, discussion and sharing. An excellent example of collective worship was observed in Early Years Foundation Stage. There was an atmosphere of awe and wonder where children were still, thoughtful and reverent. Music enhanced the mood and all the adults modelled appropriate reflective behaviour. The assembly for Remembrance Day expressed also this atmosphere of prayerful quiet as well as hearty singing accompanied by the school orchestra. Reconciliation is at the heart of the schools' provision. The parish priest puts great store on making the celebration important with a termly opportunity for all junior pupils to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The pupils rejoice in their prayer garden and protect it from disturbance even though it is close to their playground. There are plants specially planted to commemorate pupils and teachers who have died. A prayer culture is developed in the school.

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

is outstanding

Pupils have a good understanding of their role as disciples of Christ and how they can support the local and global community. Examples included non-uniform days, collecting food at harvest time, working with St Michael's Catholic High School during One World Week and at other times, supporting and collecting money for Cafod, a sign language charity, and Great Ormond Street

Hospital. Pupils are aware of the needs of members of their own school. A Year 5 pupil said 'We have had children with cancer, so we support charities for our pupils'. The school celebrates pupil achievement through school assembly with the Smile award. Displays illustrate the school's involvement with local schools, the parish, local and global community. Pupils are well able to articulate that this care for others is in response to Christ's call to love our neighbour, that the Gospel invites us to see that what we do for others we do for Christ. Pupils are made aware of the great diversity of culture, wealth and chance in life that there is in the wider world and that they all have a part to play by getting involved and being a 'global citizen'. Equally the pupils are focused on living out the Christian message in day to day matters, and were forthcoming about making sure that pupils who were lonely or distressed in the playground were in some way picked up.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

The quality and depth of the partnership between parents, school and parish is outstanding. There is a close working relationship with the parish priest. Governors are confident in their emphasis and commitment to the Catholic life of the school, their relationship with the diocese and in their outreach to the parents of the pupils. Communication reaches out to the parents in a number of ways, through newsletters, playground contact at beginning and end of the day and through the school's friendly website. The school is constructively taking forward further initiatives in communicating via text and twitter messages. A small number of parents look for further reassurance and information regarding religious education and homework. The music tradition of the school is offered in an excellent fashion as a service to other schools, deanery masses and a number of annual diocesan celebrations in Westminster Cathedral. The parish uses the school to deliver First Holy Communion preparation while the school uses the parish centre for RE conferences such as the one organised for the National School of Formation.

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

is outstanding

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of Sacred Heart school is outstanding due to the quality of shared vision for Catholic life that has been built up between the governors, the headteacher and senior leadership team, the teachers, the pupils and the parents. The mission statement is well displayed and confidently known by the pupils – 'Living, learning and loving happily together with Christ at the centre.' Every aspect of school life at Sacred Heart is underpinned by this statement. The Catholicity of the school heads the items in school development and staff development. In the light of this leadership the headteacher has been invited to be a lead in the National School of Formation. Parents were confident in their support of the Catholic life of the school.

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

- Proceed to incorporate greater awareness of Catholic Social Teaching into the life of the school.
- Find ways to involve pupils more immediately in spontaneous prayer in acts of worship at the beginning and end of the day.
- Put into effect the plans for retreat and reflection days.
- Plan further innovation in communicating with parents.

Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic Primary school in the locality of Bushey.
- The school serves the parishes of Sacred Heart & John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Bushey, Bushey Heath and Oxhey area.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 94%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 4 % and from other faiths is 1 %. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith is 1 %.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 75 %.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3.
- There are 11.63% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 3 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average.
- There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 8 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (2.66%).

Department for Education Number	919 3415
Unique Reference Number	117488
Local Authority	Hertfordshire

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 -11
Gender of pupils	Mixed Male Female
Number of pupils on roll	301
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Vivienne Morgan
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Tregear
Telephone number	01923 493040
Website	www.sacredheart682.herts.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@sacredheart682.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 May 2013
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Very Good
The Catholic life of the school	Very Good

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 11 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 1 assembly and 3 of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Deacon Anthony Clark	Lead Inspector
Mrs Florence Collins	Associate Inspector
Mrs Sinead Steed	Associate Inspector
Mrs Margaret Hanley	Associate Inspector

Diocesan inspection has four grades:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- causing concern

Published by the Diocese of Westminster

This publication is available at: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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