

# St John's Catholic Primary School

Providence Way, Baldock, SG7 6TT

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 18 January 2017



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education requires improvement

- There are weaknesses at all levels in the leadership and management of religious education.
- The religious education leader is not well supported in her role, particularly in the time allocated to carry out the role.
- The school's self-evaluation is inaccurate.
- There is little evidence of effective tracking, data analysis or monitoring in religious education.
- Pupils are not sufficiently challenged and differentiation is not evident across the school.
- Marking does not inform pupils of next steps in their learning and is not consistent across the school.
- The teaching of religious education does not ensure development and progression at deeper levels across the key stages.
- Teaching in RE does not ensure that pupils' religious literacy is developed at age appropriate levels.

### Classroom religious education has the following strengths

- Pupils are well behaved, articulate and eager to learn.
- Pupils get a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation.
- The religious education leader is eager to improve the delivery of religious education across the school with the support of the newly appointed deputy.
- The link governor for religious education is actively involved in supporting the school.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- The school motto, 'Let the light of Christ shine within us', permeates the school.
- Curriculum time for the teaching of religious education fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Prayer and worship play an important role in the daily life of the school.
- Mutual respect and value for all is evident across the school and central to the daily life in the school.
- Pupils learn and are taught the understanding of a range of traditional prayers, beginning in Early Years Foundation.
- Pupils are engaged in supporting those in need through their fundraising for the numerous nominated charities.
- Parents are generous in their time and support of the school.
- The active school prayer group is flourishing and is well supported by pupils, staff and parents alike.
- The school works in harmony as part of the local parish and community.

### The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- The school's self-evaluation is not accurate in its understanding of its distinctive Catholic nature.
- Pupils do not have an understanding of the theology that underpins their fundraising efforts.
- The governing body do not have systems in place to actively monitor and evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

The main area of improvement has been the introduction of 'Big Writing' books to ensure that pupils have the opportunities for extended writing.

### The content of classroom religious education requires improvement

The content of the religious education curriculum for this Catholic school meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). However, pupils work lacks differentiation or challenge for higher ability pupils. Creativity or use of scripture is limited in the teaching and learning of religious education (RE). Planning in RE does not ensure progression and development at deeper levels as pupils progress through the school. Pupils are being taught about other faiths, especially Judaism. The structure, planning and content of this school's RE curriculum is weak and requires improvement.

### Pupil achievement in religious education requires improvement

Pupil achievement requires improvement in this school. Pupils are articulate and show a desire to learn in their lessons but this is not being matched in their achievement. An in-depth look at pupil books from the current year as well as the previous year, along with discussions with pupils in Key Stage 2 confirmed that pupil achievement required immediate improvement. Record keeping on pupils' progress is very basic and lacks any detail to support the development of RE within the school. Tracking and monitoring of RE has been hampered by the lack of time that the RE leader receives in order to fulfill her role adequately. The school does not provide sufficient challenge for the more able pupils and differentiation in lessons was limited. Since the previous inspection pupils are now being given the chance to produce longer pieces of extended writing and this is in the early stages of showing improvement. The learning environment in the Early Years Foundation (EYF) both indoors and outside is of a high standard and has been well structured and so the youngest pupils get a good start to their RE learning. Behaviour is of a high standard across the school and pupils were very helpful and polite to the inspectors.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

Teaching across the school requires improvement. Teaching did not provide sufficient challenge and tasks and questions were not matched to the abilities of individual pupils. In some classes there was evidence of limited subject knowledge of religious education in accordance with the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. Marking is basic in many classes and does not provide pupils with an understanding of how to improve their work. Opportunities for the EYF pupils were good and teaching was judged to be good in this area. Pupils do enjoy their RE lessons and a Year 6 pupil told the inspector, 'RE lessons are a moment of calm and reflection during my busy school day'

### The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education requires improvement

Leadership and management of RE requires improvement in this school. The school has recently been through a period of challenge and turbulence in its leadership and this has impacted on the outcomes for the school and its pupils. The recruitment and retention of Catholic teachers has been a concern for the school in the last few years and therefore staff professional development needs a higher focus. Monitoring of RE and quality of teaching lack rigour and systems are not in place to

allow this to happen on a regular basis. The RE leader only has an allocation of three days per week and has only been in post a short while. Due to this allocation and lack of time to monitor the subject she has not had the time to make the impact or changes required. The appointment of the new deputy head teacher provides the school with the opportunity to think creatively about the leadership of RE and ensure some much needed rigour to the subject.

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

- Review the leadership of RE as a priority.
- Raise the standards of teaching and learning in RE across the school.
- Introduce rigorous systems to assess pupil's achievement and progress in RE.
- Review the curriculum and provide professional development for staff in order that they have a clearer understanding of the topics they are teaching.
- Ensure that marking provides developmental feedback to pupils so they know how to improve their work.
- Ensure that tasks are differentiated and provide challenge to pupils of all abilities.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection the school has established a prayer group that gives staff and pupils the opportunity to pray during lunchtimes. Parents also use the prayer group during the week. The RE leader has introduced a rota for older pupils to attend Mass on regular basis and is supported by the parish priest in this initiative. The school continues in its commitment to promote social justice and maintaining their support for their chosen charities.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is good

RE has a good status within the school and is at the core of the school's daily practice. The Catholic identity and ethos of St John's can be felt around the school. The school's mission statement; 'Let the Light of Christ shine in us' permeates the school and is prominently displayed for all to see. All staff take part in the Catholic life of the school and are prominent and active participants in their attendance at Mass and assemblies. RE is allocated a budget in line with other core subjects and has a good status within the school and parent community. Curriculum time for the teaching of religious education fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. RE prayer focus areas are prominent in all classrooms; however displays are an aspect for further development.

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

is good

Prayer is central to the daily life of the school. Prayer areas in each class are used several times daily as a focal point for praying. Pupils learn and are taught and understand a range of traditional prayers, beginning in Early Years Foundation. Pupils in classes and assemblies participate with reverence and respect. They sing well and are able to use the silent opportunities given as an extension to their own prayer focus and meditational skills. Pupils compose their own prayers and these are used in some classes as part of lessons and made into prayer books. The outside area of the school has designated areas for prayer, in the form of prayer seats, where children can sit in quiet reflection. The school has a flourishing prayer group which is open to pupils, staff and parents. All meetings in school begin with a prayer and school newsletters with a quote from scripture. Pupils are actively involved in preparing for school Masses and pupil led worship and parents are invited to share in these opportunities. The sacrament of Reconciliation is embedded within school practice throughout the liturgical year. Pupils from other faith traditions experience understanding and respect for their religious beliefs.

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

is good

The pupils at St John's respect and value one another and have a strong sense of their Catholic identity. They are actively engaged in activities that help others by raising money for those who are less fortunate. The range of charities supported is wide, including Cafod, Kiddies Support Scheme, Cancer Research and the British Heart Foundation. The pupils have a good understanding of the gospel messages and took an active part in the Year of Mercy activities and events. The school has recently become a Fair Trade school and pupils are beginning to develop a greater social awareness.

The school is proud of its support for such a range of charities and children can clearly explain why they are taking part but the theology underpinning the Common Good is not yet embedded in pupils' understanding. This is an area for further development for the school.

**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 good**

There are strong and fruitful links with the local parish and the parish priest is a regular visitor to school, offering support to pupils and staff. Key Stage 2 pupils attend Mass regularly both in school and church. This enhances the religious education providing first hand experiences of the liturgical life of the church. Parents are informed termly about the upcoming themes in religious education and the school website provides additional information about the Catholic life of the school. The partnership with the diocese and other Catholic schools needs to be further developed to ensure that support and opportunities for sharing and support are maximised. The questionnaire sent home as part of the inspection indicated that the majority of parents are happy with the school and its commitment to pupils and families. The school website provides parents with some basic information about the prayers in school but lacks more information about RE and the Catholic life of the school which would benefit parents and celebrate the school and its ethos.

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

**is good**

The school mission statement is at the heart of the school community and is shared by all stakeholders. The school leadership has experienced a challenging and turbulent year and this has had an impact on RE and the Catholic life of the school. The appointment of the new deputy head is providing the drive and ambition to improve although it is too early to see the impact that her commitment will bring. There is a growing commitment at all levels to promote the Catholic life and ethos of the school. Governors understand their role and provide some challenge and support to the school in their judgements. The Catholic life of the school should now form a regular part of the discussion to inform school self-evaluation.

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

- Review the leadership and management of RE by ensuring that it is given a full time allocation.
- Develop an understanding in pupils of the theology that underpins the Common Good.
- Update the school website with regular information for parents about what is being taught in RE and the Catholic life of the school.
- Ensure the celebration of the Catholic life of the school by improving the quality of displays both in classrooms and common areas around the school.

## Information about this school

- The school is a one- form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Hertfordshire.
- The school serves the parish of Holy Trinity and St Augustine of Canterbury, Baldock.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 66%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 19% and from other faiths is 4%.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 49%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 1.
- There are 7.7% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 2 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 well below average.
- There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 20 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (8.6%).

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	919 3413
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	138316
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy Trust
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 -11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	223
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	The governing body and academy trust
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Gary Pearce
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Alex Hanou
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 892478
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stjohns4.herts.sch.uk">www.stjohns4.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:email@stjohns4.herts.sch.uk">email@stjohns4.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	31 January 2013
<b>Grades from previous inspection:</b>	
<b>Classroom religious education</b>	Good
<b>The Catholic life of the school</b>	Outstanding

## 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 8 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended an assembly and an act 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 Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

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