

# St John Catholic Primary School

Providence Way, Baldock SG7 6TT

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 9 March 2018



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is good

- Religious education makes a strong contribution to the Catholic life of the school.
- The leadership team, subject leaders and governors have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection.
- The curriculum is carefully planned and based on the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- The school provides a rich learning environment which ensures all pupils have access to a variety of resources.
- The leadership and vision of the subject leaders ensures that all staff are supported.
- Teachers create a positive climate for learning in their lessons and pupils are interested and engaged and enthusiastic in their learning.
- Pupils enjoy religious education and know and understand what they have to do to improve their work.
- The subject leaders have reviewed planning and introduced systems to access content and make links to assessment.
- School documentation provides an accurate evaluation of the strengths and areas for development and there is evidence of action already being taken.

### Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Teachers are not yet fully confident in their religious education subject knowledge.
- Not all pupils are stretched and challenged to secure the higher levels at both key stages.

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

- The school fully recognises religious education as a core subject which is given the highest priority. Religious education receives its full allocation of 10% curriculum time, thus meeting the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- The senior leadership team and governors are committed to supporting the review and development of quality religious education and offer excellent support, reflected in the appointment of two subject leaders for religious education and the shared responsibility at governor level.
- The senior leadership team and staff demonstrate a full commitment to the school's Catholic identity in all aspects of its work.
- Classroom and wall displays around the school reflect the importance of religious education and the school's mission statement to 'let the light of Christ shine in us'.
- The school ensures that prayer and worship are a daily part of pupils' experience.
- New opportunities are continually sought to refresh existing practices in response to evaluation of prayer and liturgy.
- Pupils understand the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and links between belief and actions are explicit.
- Pupils spoke confidently of the theological underpinning of their understanding of the Common Good.
- Partnerships between home, school, parishes and the wider Catholic community are outstanding.
- Parents are positive about the school and express great appreciation of the way their children's faith life is nurtured.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

The leadership and management of religious education (RE), have been addressed since the last inspection and standards in RE have improved. The leadership and management of RE is now shared to utilise the expertise of each leader and also to ensure sufficient management time is available. Both subject leaders are supported in their roles by the shared governorship of religious education. The impact of this increased management time and shared responsibility has resulted in joint planning and a review of assessment. Rigorous tracking and monitoring of progress are now in place. The teaching of religious education now ensures development and progression at deeper levels across all key stages. Pupils now work well in religious education and there is evidence of religious literacy at age appropriate levels. The school's self-evaluation is now accurate. Religious education is now a priority and at the heart of the school.

### The content of classroom religious education is good

The content of classroom religious education throughout all key stages meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). The school has worked hard to improve the curriculum and create a rich and relevant experience for the pupils. There is a wide range of evidence of how skills are mapped to show progression across key stages. Pupils are encouraged to use the planning icons to recognise what they are learning and the impact it should have on their lives. The school uses the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching in an explicit way and their integration into the RE programmes and visual wall displays enables the pupils put their beliefs into action. The RE subject leaders provide excellent support for all staff. Through high expectations there is a clear and shared vision of the importance of promoting religious literacy among pupils.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Attainment is as generally good as in other core subjects. Good progress is made by most pupils, according to ability. Planning is systematic and detailed to take account of pupils' earlier learning. Developmental marking has been a focus and work is now showing evidence of pupils raising the standard of their answer in response to further questioning. Pupils enjoy religious education and know and understand what they have to do to improve their work. They are also confident in their use of religious language. They were enthusiastic and engaged in all the lessons observed and were keen to answer questions. Pupils demonstrated good attitudes towards their work and were consistently positive. Moderation frequently takes place at the school, as well as the involvement at deanery and diocesan levels to ensure there is accuracy at all levels. Pupils spoke eloquently about their interfaith day and what they have learned about other faiths. They saw RE as an important part of their lives and they were keen to share their knowledge and faith with others.

### The quality of teaching is good

There has been good progress in the quality of teaching due to improved planning, in-house training and higher expectations and monitoring by leadership. The RE leaders ensure there is regular planning sessions for all staff so that what is taught meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. Assessment tasks are developed with clear links to the curriculum. Teachers create a positive climate for learning in their lessons and pupils were interested and engaged and eager to do well. Pupils take a pride in their learning and were keen to respond to questioning and engage enthusiastically in lessons. Many pupils said they enjoyed RE and one pupil

commented 'We like RE because we learn about Jesus and it draws us closer to God' and another said that 'We are all created in God's image and should all be treated equally'. Teaching and marking is monitored regularly by the RE leaders, through regular book checks and learning walks. The school provides a rich learning environment, which ensures all pupils have access to a variety of resources such as the work undertaken on Fair-trade which enhances learning. There is evidence of high-quality pupil centred displays, promoting the different liturgical celebrations and current RE topics such as the Exodus and the Examen.

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

The leadership of religious education is good and consistently communicates a commitment to improvement and high standards. The headteacher and RE subject leaders have a clear vision for RE. The subject leaders recognise the amount of work that needs to be done to improve the standard of RE in the school and they share high expectations. They work together to achieve this through clarity of purpose and commitment to high standards. They have reviewed planning and introduced systems to access content and make links to assessment. The shared focus on improving teaching and learning ensures staff engage in shared observations and the subject is well planned with regular meetings and opportunities for sharing ideas. Teaching is monitored and with book scrutiny and pupil voice being developed there are now good systems in place to support teachers. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate and there are clear and rigorous strategies for addressing areas for improvement already in operation such as differentiation and stretch and challenge in lessons.

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

- Make teachers more autonomous in the planning of RE lessons so they can further develop their subject knowledge
- Ensure all pupils are stretched and challenged to secure the higher levels at both key stages.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

The appointment of the two subject leaders for religious education and the shared responsibility amongst governors has raised the profile of RE in the school. Gospel assemblies reflect the Common Good message based on recent learning in class and links the children can respond to. The seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching are used in lesson planning and whole school activities.

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

**is outstanding**

The school fully recognises religious education as a core subject which is given the highest priority. Religious education receives its full allocation of 10% curriculum time and so meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. RE is regarded as core in every sense; its budgets and teaching time allocation are comparable to other core subjects and it has the same opportunities as other areas of the curriculum. Classrooms and wall displays around the school reflect the importance of RE and the school's mission statement to 'let the light of Christ shine in us'. Religious education has high status within the school and the parent community. The leadership team and governors are committed to the review and the development of quality religious education and offer good support to the staff in their teaching of religious education.

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

**is good**

The school meets its commitment to ensuring prayer and worship are a daily part of pupils' experience at school. Pupils from other faith traditions experience understanding and respect for their religious traditions. Families are invited to share in a variety of celebrations including Mass, marking pupils' First Holy Communion and the Year 6 Mass. There are other liturgical celebrations such as the Stations of the Cross which are led by children throughout Lent. Pupils are given regular opportunities to attend Mass and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There is an active prayer group which focuses its work on Catholic Social Teaching. The group's contribution to displays around the school remind the community about their presence for prayer and liturgy. New opportunities are continually sought to refresh existing practices in response to evaluation of prayer and liturgy at the school.

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

**is outstanding**

The commitment and contribution of the school community to the Common Good is a real strength. Pupils are encouraged to consider the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and links between belief and actions is now more explicit through the RE curriculum. The pupils were able to articulate the school's recent project of 'Feed the World in 2050' focusing on liturgical models for sharing and food waste. During the recent Fairtrade fortnight all children from Year 1 upwards considered the implication of market forces on sugar farmers in 2017 and made links with the dignity of work and the rights of workers. Pupils also supported and raised money for Kiddies Support Scheme (Kiss), a Hertfordshire based charity which works in Uganda, and collected items for the local food bank during Advent. The school also supports Cafod and representatives have been

invited into the school to speak to the pupils. Pupils spoke confidently of the theological underpinning of their understanding of the Common Good.

**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 school has worked hard to establish and maintain links with parents. The parents are very positive about the Catholic life of the school which was evidenced in the recent parent questionnaire. The school website now regularly features RE activities and links to RE within the curriculum. The school had a very successful grandparent's afternoon in which grandparents spoke to the children about their experiences, linked to the 'Feed the World in 2050' project. Parents are invited into Mass and liturgical events. The school now works closely with other local Catholic primary schools and the school attended a deanery moderation of work. Year 4 pupils met and participated in spiritual activities with another local primary and there is now an on-going shared project. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and works closely with the two subject leaders and senior leadership team to create an educational experience which gives the pupils a vision for the discipleship for life. A deputy head diocesan induction day was attended by one of the subject leaders and both subject leaders participated in cross-diocesan moderation.

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

**is outstanding**

The senior leadership team and the RE leaders are committed to actively promoting the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school through their work in delivering regular staff meetings and training. They are fully committed to ensuring that RE is planned, delivered and monitored, ensuring high quality of teaching and learning enables pupils to become increasingly more religiously literate. The leadership of the school strongly and creatively expresses its support for the mission of Catholic education and ensures policies and practices reflect that mission. There are effective systems in place for planning, tracking and monitoring staff. Support is provided through coaching and mentoring, especially for new staff and non-Catholic colleagues. The school is extremely effective in developing pupils' understanding of other faiths through a structured programme which encompasses an inter faith day and includes visits to local places of worship. Governors share in the strategic leadership of the school with energy and enthusiasm and offer highly effective and excellent support and challenge to the leadership of the school on strategic matters.

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

- Create RE leaders to allow pupils to become more involved in the planning of assemblies and liturgies

## Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Baldock.
- The school serves the parish of St Augustine and the Holy Trinity in Baldock, Hertfordshire.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 64%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 20% and from other faiths is 4%. The remaining 12% of pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 46%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is one.
- There are 9% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom one has statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is 26%.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is 9% which is below national average.
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals with 13 pupils receiving the Pupil Premium (6% of pupils).

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	211
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	Diocese of Westminster 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:admin@stjohns4.herts.sch.uk">admin@stjohns4.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	January 2017
<b>Grades from previous inspection:</b>	
<b>Classroom religious education</b>	Requires Improvement
<b>The Catholic life of the school</b>	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 thirteen part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended one assembly and one 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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Lead Inspector

Miss Elizabeth Doonan

Associate Inspector

Mrs Geraldine Pears

Associate Inspector

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