

Diocese of Hallam

***INSPECTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspections Act)***

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Primary School
Finkle Street
Bentley
Doncaster
DN5 0RR

Inspection Date: 8th – 9th May 2000
Diocesan Inspector: Mrs S.M.Green

The inspection of the denominational character of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School was carried out under the direction of the Governors of the school in fulfilment of their obligations under the requirements of Canon Law (ref. 804, 806), Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspection Act, Section 13 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and Sections 241 and 259 of the Education Act, 1993. This inspection was conducted according to the Handbook for the Inspection of Religious Education in the Diocese of Hallam.

The process of Inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed to support and encourage each school community. It is hoped that this report will celebrate all that is positive and praiseworthy in Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Primary School and help promote sound development for the future

A copy of this report may be obtained from the Governors of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Primary School, Finkle Street, Bentley, Doncaster DN5 0RR or the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, Hallam Pastoral Centre, St. Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU.

Introduction

Basic Information about the School

Name of school	Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Primary
Type	Infant and Junior
Status	Voluntary Aided
Number on roll	240
Age range	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Chair of governors	Mr Derek Sullivan
Headteacher	Mr John McEnaney
Address	Finkle Street Bentley Doncaster DN5 0RP
Telephone number	01302 874291
Date of Inspection	8 th – 9 th May 2000
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Our Lady's Primary School was founded in 1929 and extended in 1966. It serves the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Bentley including the areas of Arksey, Bentley, Cusworth, Scawsby, Scawthorpe and Sprotborough. A school bus serves most of these areas.

The pupils are arranged in seven classes, each a separate year group. Fifty-four percent of pupils are Catholic. There are seven full-time teachers, including the headteacher, of whom four are Catholics and three are not Catholics and two teachers operating a job-share in Key Stage Two. There is strong support, teaching and non-teaching, for Special Educational Needs and traveller groups. Class groupings are as follows:

Reception	28
Year One	30
Year Two	29
Year Three	31
Year Four	32
Year Five	30
Year Six	29

PART ONE

ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

1. THE MISSION OF THE SCHOOL

1.2 The Mission Statement of Our Lady's is a good model. It leads all documentation, including the school prospectus and the staff handbook, developing its aims into meaningful information about the ethos of the school for all who read it on a regular basis.

1.3 The Mission Statement also declares the school's aim to work as a community with Christ as its centre and children, parents, family, staff and the Church at its heart. The splendid hall display involved every child in the school and declares Jesus to be with them always. Governors should look at ways of strengthening links with the local parish and taking this strongly Catholic community out to those who share it.

1.4 Thirty-seven questionnaires were returned by parents. They were unanimous in their praise of the school and proud to be part of such a good Christian community. Parents of children who are not Catholics feel welcomed and supported by the school. The commitment of all parents is further demonstrated by their willingness to join a school fund-raising group and organise social events shared by everyone.

1.5 Information regarding the religious education of the children is sent out to parents and they welcome this. The school prospectus is a good document, which gives comprehensive information and strong statements on Special Educational Needs, equal opportunities and the Christian ethos and Gospel values of the school.

1.6 Sacramental preparation is now carried out in the parish, by the religious education co-ordinator and parish catechists, supported by the school's religious education programme. Parents could be given more information on the value of this shared approach.

1.7 All staff in the school feel they are valued as part of the community and work well together for the benefit of the children.

1.8 The parish priest has heavy parish commitments, but is supportive of the school and visits when he can. There is also a parish sister who supports the programmes for sacramental preparation.

1.9 The school demonstrates its commitment to outreach, in its support of charitable bodies such as the Hallam Caring Service, CAFOD, Mission Together and other efforts which recognise the needs of others.

2. THE SCHOOL AS A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

2.1 The school's arrangements for collective worship fulfil statutory requirements. It is excellent in both Key Stages and is appropriate for the ages and abilities of the children. There is a real feeling of community and togetherness in the assemblies, which hold children's interest completely, create a deep sense of spirituality and offer good learning experiences of life and their own faith journey. Music is used well to create the right atmosphere.

2.2 In daily classroom liturgies and prayer times, the children are given worthwhile opportunities for private prayer and meditation. Teachers give good examples of spontaneous prayer and children could be encouraged to develop this themselves.

2.3 There is evidence of good collective worship during Lent and Advent and parents and governors praise the opportunities given for separate liturgies for the parents during Advent, led by the headteacher.

2.5 A Key Stage One assembly used drama effectively to convey its Gospel message and also created an atmosphere of joy and achievement. This assembly was strongly supported by parents as was the assembly celebrating the children's achievements. This was not only a list of worthwhile children's efforts, but also used to reinforce the message of the power of faith and love in their lives.

2.6 Staff meet weekly for their own prayer time which strengthens their spiritual development and helps to focus on religious education themes.

3. SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Spiritual Development

3.1a The spiritual and moral development of the children at Our Lady's is a great strength of the school and clearly contributes to the happy and caring environment it provides.

3.1b There is a warm and friendly atmosphere which is promoted by the headteacher and staff. All who come into the school are made to feel welcome.

3.1c In assemblies and classroom collective worship, the children are quietly attentive and they show a natural and unforced reverence which is demonstrably contributing to their spiritual development.

3.1d Children have a good knowledge of traditional prayers and these are used regularly. Some thought might now be given to developing opportunities for spontaneous prayer with the children. Teachers already give some good examples of this.

3.1e At the end of religious education lessons at the beginning of a new topic, some teachers bring the session to a close with a simple prayer and meditation which helps to provide the right focus for the children.

3.2 Moral Development

3.2a Relationships are good throughout the school and good examples are set by all adults. This can only encourage the moral development of the children.

3.2b Children behave very well, in and out of school. As an example of this, when a Key Stage Two class went out to visit a residential home, their behaviour was praised by staff and residents. This focus on working with elderly people is a regular commitment in the curriculum for upper Key Stage Two children. It is clearly of mutual benefit to children and those they visit and just as clearly of benefit to the spiritual and moral development of the young people in their discussions with those they visit.

3.2c The older children are encouraged to care for and support the younger ones in the school in the dining hall and playground.

3.2d A student council meets regularly with the headteacher to discuss concerns raised by the pupils. Their views are respected and they are expected to explain and justify their requests. This is very good experience for them in considering the moral obligations of themselves and their peers and the needs of others.

3.2e Children play well together and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. A Key Stage One assembly about Zaccheus was well done and gave the whole school good examples of moral choices.

PART TWO

CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

4. STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

4.1 Attainment and Progress

4.1a The standard of children's written work is good. It is well presented and all children are expected to produce a reasonable amount of work whatever their ability level. It is carefully and appropriately marked.

4.1b Most work is done in religious education books and this makes it easier to monitor progress. A consistent procedure throughout the school should be adopted, which would make recording and monitoring simpler and more effective and would support less experienced teachers.

4.1c Children's oral work is very good throughout the Key Stages and, in observation of lessons and discussions with the children, gives evidence of sound understanding of topics and of Scripture and doctrine.

4.2 Attitudes to Learning

4.2a The children's attitude to learning is very good throughout the Key Stages. During oral work they listen well and respond enthusiastically in discussion or questioning. In assemblies their attentiveness is equally good and they show great interest in the themes and join in prayers well.

4.2b The children work well together and co-operate on group work sensibly. When asked to get on with their own work they do so readily and with interest and enthusiasm.

5. QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROVIDED

5.1 Teaching

5.1a There is some very good teaching in both Key Stages. In the best lessons, there is a good rapport between teachers and pupils, direct teaching is interesting and focuses clearly on the theme. There is a good balance between direct teaching, discussion and related activities. Resources are used well and are mostly appropriate for the children's age and abilities.

5.1b The relationships between teacher and pupils are very good

5.1c Multi-faith elements in the religious education scheme are addressed and there is evidence in displays of good work in this area.

5.1d Differentiation is mainly by outcome, but all children are encouraged to achieve the best of which they are capable and in Key Stage Two, extension activities are available for the more able pupils.

5.1e The percentage of time spent on religious education as presented by the school does not fulfil the requirements of the Bishops' Conference, however this is being addressed.

5.1f There is some monitoring and evaluation of themes and topics taking place and this will need to be worked in with the general procedures planned for recording, reporting and assessment.

5.1g The major focus on Europe in school at present gives each class in Key Stage Two a European partner class and is used to give the children some good opportunities for cross cultural experiences.

5.2 Religious education curriculum and assessment

5.2a The school has a very committed and hard-working religious education co-ordinator. Tribute is paid by members of staff to the ongoing support and help received from the co-ordinator. Information from the diocese is regularly passed on to staff at staff meetings, planning is discussed and co-ordinated and assessment procedures evaluated. Classroom monitoring of this curriculum area could be further discussed.

5.2b There is a good policy document on religious education which incorporates the diocesan framework of 'Here I Am', which is followed in all classes.

5.2c Much good work has been done on assessment since the last inspection, and this should now be developed in conjunction with the plans for recording, reporting and assessment, particularly with some development in reporting to parents.

5.2d Medium and long term planning is very well done and lesson plans focus clearly on objectives. The importance of the “Relate” and “Remember” elements of the programme are recognised and stressed.

6. THE MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

6.1 Leadership and Management

6.1a Our Lady's is well led by a gifted and energetic headteacher who is dedicated to promoting the Christian values of the school, the spiritual and moral development of the children, the welfare of children, parents and staff and a high standard of religious education

6.1b The religious education co-ordinator is a dedicated and hard-working teacher with a very strong commitment to the religious education of the children and to giving strong support to colleagues where appropriate. Much good work has been done by the co-ordinator on assessment in religious education which can now be developed to include recording and reporting.

6.1c The Chair of Governors is strongly supportive of the school and a regular visitor. All governors are praised for their active support. Governors should now look to their Mission Statement and try to develop stronger links with the parish community.

6.1d Two governors work in school regularly and this sends a strong message of support and commitment.

6.2 Staffing, Accommodation and Resources

6.2a Our Lady's has a loyal hard-working staff who are all dedicated to the well-being and good spiritual and moral development of their pupils. A job-share team works well in the religious education of the children of their class.

6.2b Non-teaching and administrative staff are well trained, cheerful and welcoming and all set good examples to the children, of care and consideration for others.

6.2c Peripatetic support staff and visiting teachers are seen as important parts of the school community and work closely with permanent staff.

6.2d The school building has undergone much alteration and refurbishment in recent years and this has created an attractive environment for the children. This is seen by headteacher and governors as an important element in promoting the spiritual and moral development of the children as well as their physical wellbeing.

6.2e The school is clean and well cared for by a loyal caretaker who has a special understanding of the problems of the area in which the school is built.

6.2f Classrooms are attractive and have well presented religious education displays and prayer areas, some of which are used for prayer and meditation at the conclusion of a lesson.

6.2g There are good resources in books for teachers, with a useful section of books to support the needs of parents in religious education and sacramental preparation. Each classroom has artefacts for religious education and more could be built up centrally. A list for staff of resources in books and artefacts would be useful. Budget needs for religious education are addressed each year and this is a priority, with other foundation subjects, for the coming year.

PART THREE

MAIN FINDINGS AND KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

7. MAIN FINDINGS

7.1 Our Lady's is a good Catholic school which demonstrates strong Gospel values in its daily life as a Christian community.

7.2 It is well led by a gifted and hard-working headteacher, who leads by example and motivates staff and children to promote the best spiritual and moral development of all in the school.

7.3 The spiritual and moral development of the children is a great strength of the school. High praise is given by parents for the spiritual and moral development of their children and the good Christian atmosphere of the school. There is strong and effective leadership in this area.

7.4 The Mission Statement of Our Lady's is a good model, which affirms the aim of the school to work as a community with Christ at its centre and children, parents, family, home, staff and the Church at its heart. Governors may now wish to develop further the theme of church as expressed in its Mission Statement and bring it closer to home.

7.5 The school is well supported by governors, who visit and work in school whenever possible, and by the parish priest, who praises the calm atmosphere created by the school.

7.6 The children behave very well in and out of school. There is a welcoming and friendly atmosphere in Our Lady's encouraged by the good example of the headteacher and all staff, teaching and non-teaching.

7.7 Relationships are very good throughout, among the children, between children and staff and among all adults who work in the school.

7.8 Parents give strong support to the school in many different ways. They feel welcome in the school as visitors or working in the classroom alongside teachers, which encourages their own personal development.

7.9 Collective worship is excellent in both Key Stages. It is appropriate for the ages and abilities of the children and promotes their spiritual and moral development to a high level. Assemblies and liturgies are strongly supported by parents, who value the opportunities for involvement.

7.10 There is some very good teaching in religious education in both Key Stages. Parents praise the good work done in religious education by the teachers, in helping their children to be good examples of Christian living.

7.11 Since the last inspection all key issues have been addressed.

7.12 There is a policy document in place for spiritual and moral development which is a good model.

7.13 The multi cultural dimension of religious education is being addressed and there is evidence of the development of links with other cultures and multi –faith areas in the religious education scheme.

7.14 A clear policy is in place for admissions and there is good support from the LEA where appropriate.

7.15 The needs of children who are not baptised Catholics are recognised and parents are given full support in areas such as sacramental preparation and understanding the Christian ethos of the school. All staff are praised by parents for their caring and supportive work for children and families.

7.16 Time is given for religious education In-service for staff on a regular basis and this will be further developed.

7.17 Children’s written work is well presented and there is evidence of very good knowledge and understanding in oral work and in discussions with children . Much work has been done on assessment for religious education and further development should now follow in refining procedures in recording, reporting to parents and assessment.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To develop further the improvements made since the last inspection, the governors and staff of Our Lady’s should now:-

1. Celebrate and consolidate the school’s achievements in good leadership, teaching strengths, parental support and the spiritual and moral development of the children.
2. Refine and develop the procedures already in place for assessment in religious education .
3. In reports to parents, clarify information given on children’s progress in knowledge and understanding of faith, doctrine, Scripture and liturgy.
4. Develop a consistent policy for children’s written work in religious education throughout the school, based on the good standards already in place and the very good oral work.
5. Look for opportunities to strengthen links with the parish community.
6. Ensure that 10% of curriculum time is allocated to religious education.

APPENDIX TWO: EVIDENCE BASE

The programme of inspection included a pre-inspection visit to the school, the Ofsted parent meeting, two full days of inspection and a morning visit.

Religious education teaching was observed in all classes including the nursery, whole school collective worship in both Key Stages and a class assembly in Key Stage One.

A comprehensive selection of documentation was presented, including the School Development Plan and relevant policies for religious education, collective worship, spiritual and moral development and behaviour. There is an approved policy which includes sex education called personal and social development. The Mission Statement, headteacher's form, school prospectus, staff handbook, liturgy programme, long and medium term plans, lesson plans and regular timetables were also seen. There was information regarding chaplaincy provision, religious education staff meetings and inset.

Interviews were held with the parish priest, the headteacher and Chair of Governors, the religious education co-ordinator and a parent governor.

There were informal discussions with staff, parents, caretaking staff, non-teaching staff, voluntary helpers and children.

The Diocesan Inspector wishes to place on record her thanks for the kindness and co-operation shown by Governors, parish priest, headteacher and all staff, parents and children during this inspection.