

**DIOCESE OF HALLAM SCHOOLS'  
DEPARTMENT**



**SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT**

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

School URN	112899
Name of Chairman of Governors	Father Peter McGuire
Name of Headteacher	Mrs Mary Emmott
Date of Inspection	22nd June 2009
Section 48 Inspector	Mrs Gillian Foster

“... an enthusiasm for the things of God.”

## **Introduction**

The Inspection of Immaculate Conception Catholic Primary School has been carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Diocese of Hallam Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections as approved by the Bishop of Hallam.

The process of inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed as an activity of the Church to support schools in further deepening the quality of Catholic education provided.

## **Details of the school**

Immaculate Conception Catholic Primary School is similar in size to many primary schools and educates pupils from a wide catchment area. Many children are transported to school on one of three school buses servicing the surrounding areas. The school is essentially fed from two parishes, Immaculate Conception, Spinkhill and Sacred Heart, Clowne. School is in close proximity to Immaculate Conception Church. The school is situated on a split site; the main school is separated from the hall by a road. A new building is underway adjacent to the hall and school expects to move into this in October 2009. Virtually all pupils are from White British backgrounds and all have English as their first language. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to Foundation Stage are slightly below those typical of children nationally, by the end of Key Stage Two, standards are above national expectations. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is below average; there are within this group, many pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Of the 220 pupils on roll, 193, 88%, are baptised Catholics, almost all of the remaining pupils are from other Christian denominations. There are 6 full-time and 2 part-time teachers, all of whom are Catholic and 6 of them hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or its equivalent.

The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, many provided by school staff and some organised and run by older pupils from the nearby Mount St Mary's Independent Catholic College. There are very good links between the school, parents, carers and members of the parish communities. Almost all parents are very well satisfied with the standards of education and the personal care their children receive. Parents support the school in many practical ways and give generously of their time and resources. Governors, children, staff, parents and parishioners are very proud of their school and it is held in very high regard in the community.

## Information about the school

Type of School	Primary, Voluntary Aided
Age profile of Students	4 - 11
Number on roll	220
Number of Students on Special Educational Needs Register	21
Number of Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	1
Number of Catholics on roll	193
Number of Other Christian Denominations	29
Number of other Faiths	0
School address	College Road Spinkhill Sheffield S21 3YB
Telephone Number	01246 432916
Fax Number	01246 433085
Email	headteacher@immaculate.derbyshire.sch.uk
Website	www.immaculate.derbyshire.sch.uk

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

### How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners

The provision of Catholic education at Immaculate Conception School is **good** with many outstanding features. The school has a very strong sense of mission which is supported by a committed team of practising Catholics, currently all teaching staff and governors are Catholic. All leaders are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and this vision is shared by all staff. Gospel values lie at the heart of all the school strives to achieve for its children and this is reflected in the warmth of relationships and mutual respect so clearly evident.

The aspirations enshrined in the Mission Statement, that “With God’s help to grow and develop in all areas of our lives, within a safe, happy, stimulating environment and aim to be the best we can”, are achieved on a daily basis. Children participate in and often plan Masses and high quality acts of Collective Worship and liturgies which are shared with families and parishioners. Prayer is an integral part of school life and together with the many opportunities children are given to reflect on and understand issues of justice and peace, their spiritual and moral development is a strength of the school. The headteacher and all staff are committed to delivering high quality Religious Education and raising standards, initiatives undertaken in recent years have succeeded in raising attainment. Pupils are very well cared for, they feel loved, secure and respected. To enhance provision for pastoral care further, members of the teaching and support staff and some governors have recently trained to become Rainbows facilitators and a Rainbows group will begin in September 2009 to offer support to those children suffering bereavement, separation or trauma. Children are given many opportunities to engage with the local and wider communities and governors are seeking ways to promote community cohesion further and broaden the children’s knowledge, understanding and appreciation of those of other faiths and cultures.

### **The effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection**

The last Religious Education inspection took place in July 2006 and the following areas were identified as areas for further development:

- The inclusion of a specific section in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) relating to the development of the Catholic life of the school
- The introduction of rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in Religious Education
- Review assessment procedures in light of recent recommendations and guidance from the diocese.

School addressed all of the above areas. Following the inspection in 2006, a specific section relating to the development of the Catholic life of the school was included in the SIP, currently this section developed in the last academic year, is on-going; there is now a need for governors and staff to review this and construct a plan relevant to the needs of the school today. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in Religious Education does take place, the headteacher carries out lesson observations and this has contributed to raising standards of teaching and learning. Assessment procedures were reviewed and systems are now in place which ensure that staff have a clear understanding of pupils standards of attainment, this is reflected in planning which meets the individual needs of pupils. The area of assessment and tracking remains a priority for the school and they await new guidance from the Diocese in September before once more reviewing procedures.

## **The capacity to further deepen the quality of Catholic education**

The capacity to further deepen the quality of Catholic education is **good**. Staff are very hard working, committed and skilled, they share the vision of the leadership to provide excellence for the children in their spiritual, moral, personal and academic education. Governors are supportive and active in supporting school and are effective in offering appropriate challenge. All leaders, staff and governors, have a clear idea of priorities for development and have a realistic view of timeframes for implementation, preferring to embed new initiatives in practice before embarking on new ones; this is a sensible approach and has resulted in sustainable progress. There is however some lack of rigour in constructing development plans and this needs to be addressed. Sharply focused development plans set within stated timeframes, together with actions to achieve implementation, success criteria and persons accountable, would enable more effective monitoring and evaluation to take place by governors and staff. Much of the excellent practice that goes on within the school community is accepted by them as 'understood'. In order to safeguard and develop this excellence it is necessary to identify specifically what contributes to this and how it can be deepened. Maintaining the excellent ethos could be particularly important at a time when school is moving from the old building where children and staff are in close proximity to each other to a new, much larger building. The inspector agrees with the development priorities identified by the school and would add the following for consideration by governors and staff:

- To include a specific section in the SIP where identified priorities for further deepening the quality of Catholic education are included together with appropriate timeframes, actions for implementation, persons accountable and success criteria.
- Continue to develop strategies and activities to promote community cohesion.
- To build upon the role of the Religious Education Co-ordinator to include the monitoring of teaching and learning and to develop procedures for sharing and disseminating good practice.

## **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **How effective are leadership and management in the development of the Catholic life of the school?**

The leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school is **good**. The leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and all in school are aware of and strive to fulfil the aims of the Mission Statement, this is apparent in all aspects of school life. The Governors ensure that all policies and documentation reflect and support the school's Catholic identity. The Chairman of Governors, who is also the parish priest, gives very strong spiritual leadership and guidance and has a significant impact on the spiritual and moral development of the children and on staff formation. The headteacher provides strong, clearly focused leadership, her management style nurtures staff and inspires them with the confidence to become effective educators. A strong leadership team ably support the headteacher in striving for

and achieving good outcomes for children. The school places a high priority on the spiritual and moral development of the children and opportunities for this is woven into every strand of school life. Excellent relationships exist within the school community between children, staff, parents/carers and parishioners. Staff are supportive of each other and provide very good role models for the children. Parents are very well satisfied with the education and personal care their children receive and are given many opportunities, both formal and informal to make their views known. School offers pupils many opportunities to engage with communities other than their own both locally and globally, for example their involvement in the Fairtrade initiative and the Walk for Water project, this reflects the school's approach to moral issues. School is seeking to promote community cohesion further by developing closer links with other schools and organisations so that pupils can have the experience of working alongside others from different faith and cultural backgrounds, this is an identified area for development. In order to facilitate more rigorous and effective monitoring and evaluation of development priorities, as stated earlier in this report, consideration needs to be given to the regular inclusion in the SIP of priorities to further deepen the Catholic life of the school which are currently implicit rather than explicit.

## **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL: COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

### **How good is the quality of Collective Worship?**

The quality of Collective Worship is **outstanding**. There is an excellent policy for Collective Worship setting out the rationale and practical ways of implementation. The policy is regularly reviewed, monitored and evaluated by governors and the headteacher. Foundation governors acknowledge their specific role in this and fulfil their obligations effectively. The impact of the parish priest in supporting and guiding Collective Worship is significant in achieving and maintaining high standards. Prayer is an essential part of school life and children are at ease when composing and contributing to prayer. In collaboration with the parish priest, liturgical celebrations are very well prepared and inclusive, they incorporate the rituals of the liturgy of the word and help the children to become familiar with parts of the Mass; this good practice helps children to realise that they are an important and valued part of a worshipping, liturgical community of faith. These feelings of belonging are strengthened by sharing Masses and celebrations with families and parishioners. Daily acts of worship are child-centred and age appropriate, they are always engaging and relevant to the lives of the children. From Reception class onwards, children prepare their Masses and contribute to Collective Worship; throughout all liturgical celebrations children are reverent and responsive and they enliven these gatherings with joyful singing. Collective Worship makes a significant contribution to the outstanding spiritual and moral development of the children.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS**

### **How well do learners achieve in Religious Education?**

Learners achievement in Religious Education is **good**. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress and standards of achievement and attainment in written/recorded work is good and in line with those in other core subjects. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, they are enthusiastic about their learning and obviously enjoy their Religious Education lessons. Almost all pupils show good recall of work done previously and they demonstrate good Biblical knowledge. Children are encouraged to and do express their views and opinions confidently, they listen respectfully to the views of their classmates and teachers. Pupils work very well together in partner and group work, affirming each other and in some instances offering peer review and support. School is seeking to develop further ways of helping pupils to self-evaluate their work and this will contribute to raising standards even more and supporting pupils to become independent learners. Children are challenged to think deeply about how the Gospel message they are learning about impacts on them and as a result they have very good understanding of moral and social issues. Children take on responsibilities and contribute to school and the broader community in a wide variety of ways; in school the operation of the 'buddy' system, the anti-bullying campaign led by children and the effective work of the School Council all make an impact on the smooth running of the school. The children's involvement in Global initiatives such as CAFOD and Fairtrade have enabled them to develop real understanding of issues of justice and peace and have fuelled their desire to pray for and fund-raise for these causes in the knowledge that their contributions can make a difference.

## **QUALITY OF PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?**

Teaching and learning in Religious Education is **outstanding**. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the 'Here I Am' programme which forms the basis of the Religious Education curriculum. Work is thoroughly planned, Key Stage One teachers plan together as do teachers of Years Three and Four and Five and Six; these planning partnerships are supportive and enrich planning helping to ensure continuity and progression of teaching and learning. All lessons have clear learning objectives which teachers share with pupils. Assessment procedures are effective, teachers have good knowledge of standards of attainment of pupils and plan to meet the full range of pupils needs. All teachers plan differentiated work although care needs to be taken to ensure that the more able pupils are always sufficiently challenged. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and dedicated support assistants, they make good progress and achieve well. Teachers employ many different teaching styles and strategies to engage the interests of the pupils. Lessons are always rooted in the children's own experiences, they are interesting and engaging and greatly enhanced by all teachers enthusiasm and willingness

to be open with the children and share their own experiences and commitment to their faith. All teachers have good questioning skills, they allow children time to reflect before answering questions and by allowing children to develop their answers, they lead them to higher levels of understanding. Children are challenged to think spiritually and ethically, they are given many opportunities for reflection and meditation, this has a powerful impact on their spiritual and moral development. Teachers create and promote positive learning environments through their own enthusiasm and the affirmation and respect they give to the children, as a result, relationships in class and throughout the whole school community are excellent. There is an evident culture of mutual respect where children are treated with warmth and dignity and this is reflected in their behaviour towards each other and their good learning.

### **How well does the Religious Education curriculum meet the needs and interests of the learners?**

The efforts of the school in meeting the needs and interests of all learners is **outstanding**. The school devotes ten percent of teaching time to Religious Education and ensures full coverage of the Curriculum Directory thus fulfilling the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The curriculum is largely based on the 'Here I Am' programme and is enriched by other high quality materials. All lessons are well planned, they are relevant and meaningful to the age and understanding of the children. Multi-Faith and Multi-Cultural education is well taught from the 'Here I Am' programme; school is seeking ways of further developing and enriching this aspect of the children's learning in an effort to promote community cohesion. The school is currently focusing on language development and all aspects of this are included in Religious Education which is having an impact on raising standards of attainment. Teachers have the same high expectations for all pupils in Religious Education as they do for other core subjects. ICT is used very effectively both by staff and pupils in Religious Education. The imaginative use of inter-active whiteboards by teachers provides a stimulating teaching tool and the children's good skills in ICT allows them to use the computers to produce work of high quality in Religious Education. Many other cross-curricular links are planned for, adding greater breadth and creativity to the delivery of Religious Education. The many additional activities the children have, the opportunity to engage in such as tending an allotment where vegetables are harvested and cooked as part of school meals, the Year Six residential visit shared with another Catholic primary school in Sheffield, contribute to the breadth of experiences the children enjoy and benefit from. Through the 'Nurturing Human Wholeness' programme, children are taught about relationships from the earliest years. In Years Five and Six, appropriate sex education is delivered, parents are informed and consulted about this aspect of their children's education. Through the excellence of Collective Worship, the good delivery of the Religious Education curriculum, the use of weekly 'Statements to Live By' and their engagement with many local and global issues, children have excellent knowledge and understanding of social and moral issues.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?

The leadership and management of Religious Education at Immaculate Conception School is **good**. The governors and headteacher ensure that Religious Education is given a very high priority and all leaders are strongly focused on the Mission Statement. The Religious Education Co-ordinator is deeply committed to her faith and this is reflected in her effective leadership of the subject. There is a two yearly cycle for monitoring and evaluation through planning scrutiny, lesson observations, work scrutiny, Collective Worship observations, monitoring displays and prayer corners. Currently the headteacher conducts lesson observations in Religious Education, consideration should now be given to building on the role of the co-ordinator to include lesson observations and the development of procedures for sharing and disseminating good practice. Governors are made aware of standards in Religious Education, but as suggested earlier in the report, the construction of more detailed development plans would facilitate more rigorous monitoring by them. Equal opportunities is an integral part of school life and all pupils have access to all areas of the curriculum. Staff development and formation is given a high priority and staff attend appropriate INSET and training to allow them to develop their own skills; the parish priest makes a significant contribution to staff formation. Religious Education has been allocated a generous share of budget in recent years, this has been wisely spent and school is well resourced to deliver the curriculum. Of particular value are the Collective Worship boxes which each class has, these contain candles, crosses, a variety of Bibles and drapes which children use when preparing and participating in Collective Worship. The current school building is old and has many challenges but staff overcome these and create bright, stimulating learning environments where displays, largely of children's work, affirm and celebrate the distinctive Catholic nature and ethos of the school. The whole school community is looking forward to moving into the new building in October 2009. Excellent links exist with parents, the parish and diocesan agencies to support work in Religious Education. The excellence of relationships is a strength of the school and contribute in large measure to the effectiveness of supporting and raising standards for all learners who flourish in this warm, Christ centred environment.

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<b>Summary of Inspection Judgements:</b>	
<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The Catholic Life of the School</b>	
How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?	<b>Good</b>
How good is the quality of Collective Worship?	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Religious Education</b>	
How well do learners achieve in Religious Education?	<b>Good</b>
How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?	<b>Outstanding</b>
How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	<b>Outstanding</b>
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?	<b>Good</b>

Further copies of this report are obtainable from Immaculate Conception Catholic Primary School or from the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, The Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU Tel: 0114 2566440