

DIOCESE OF HALLAM SCHOOLS'  
DEPARTMENT



**SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT**

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ST GERARD'S CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

School URN	106941
Name of Chairman of Governors	Mr C MacCormac
Name of Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Lunn
Date of Inspection	15 <sup>th</sup> September 2009
Section 48 Inspector	Mrs Barbara Jarrett

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

## **Introduction**

The Inspection of St Gerard's 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.

## **Information about the school**

<b>Type of School</b>	<b>St Gerard's Catholic Primary</b>
<b>Age profile of Students</b>	<b>4-11</b>
<b>Number on roll</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Number of Students on Special Educational Needs Register</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Number of Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Number of Catholics on roll</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Number of Other Christian Denominations</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Number of other Faiths</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>School address</b>	<b>Park Nook, Doncaster Road, Thrybergh Rotherham S65 4AE</b>
<b>Telephone Number</b>	<b>01709 850568</b>
<b>Fax Number</b>	<b>01709 855948</b>
<b>Email</b>	<b>st.gerardsc.primary@rotherham.gov.uk</b>
<b>Website</b>	

## **DETAILS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Gerard's is a smaller than average primary school which was founded in 1928. Although the published admission number is 20, the intake fluctuates year on year. Pupils are taught in five mixed age classes.

Almost all pupils are from white British backgrounds and few have a home language that is not English. The area surrounding the school is one of significant deprivation and the school is part of the local Thrybergh Community Learning Partnership which has replaced the EAZ in the area. 37% are eligible for free school meals and the number of children with special educational needs is higher than average. Attainment on entry is well below average in all areas

The pupils come from the Parish of St Gerard's Thrybergh. The parish priest is also responsible for the neighbouring parish of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, which has its own Catholic Primary School. Many of the children have little experience of Church before starting school.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

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

The overall effectiveness and efficiency of the provision of Catholic education is good. The distinctive ethos of the school is apparent in the warm and welcoming environment provided to its parents and children. The mission statement puts Christ at the centre of every area of the work of the school and it is lived out through the commitment of all leaders to ensure all children flourish. The headteacher and governors are committed to promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school; they have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. They are supported by hardworking and committed staff. Excellent relationships are evident throughout the school and the children feel safe and respected. There is a well established pattern of Rainbows to support children and families at difficult times in their lives. Many parents spoke of the way the staff did not only teach the children about their faith but showed them how this should be lived out in their daily lives.

The school has a policy on Social Cohesion and this supports the good work carried out in this area. Children are given many opportunities to engage with the local communities and do much work to support national and international charities. In order to develop the role of the school in supporting racial harmony in the Rotherham, the parish priest has facilitated a programme of interfaith links between Catholic and state schools in Rotherham. Children from St Gerard's will work with children from other faith backgrounds on sports, gardening and art projects.

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

Since the last inspection the school has improved the quality of teaching and learning of Religious Education as part of its focus on speaking and listening. Evidence from lesson observation shows, that by the time the children reach year six, most children are confident speakers able to articulate their own thoughts feelings and opinions. This makes a valuable contribution to their learning.

A new marking policy has been introduced for all areas of the curriculum. When this is used well, it ensures that children are given feedback which tells them what they have done well and how they can further improve their work.

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

The capacity to further deepen the quality of Catholic education is good. Following a period of turbulence the school has started the new academic year with a new staffing structure in place. All staff have a strong commitment to raising standards of attainment and the pastoral care of welfare of the children. There is an effective governing body which understands and fulfils its role in holding the school to account for the provision it makes for all pupils. The parish priest is supportive of the school and is active in developing and improving links between the parish and school.

The quality of Catholic Education forms a central part of the School Improvement Plan. The school devotes one of its INSET day to developing the Catholic life of the school

## **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 are good. The headteacher, staff and governors are committed to the school and its community. Leaders know well the strengths and areas for development and these are closely linked to the priorities in the school improvement plan.

The leadership of the headteacher is strong and clearly focussed. Her management style is effective in ensuring that all staff are confident in their role and understand the contribution they make to the life of the school. She has a clear vision of excellence, which is shared by the whole school community.

There is a very effective chair of governors who has a long association with the school. His skills and expertise in the field of education enable him fulfil the role very effectively. He is very knowledgeable about the school and its community.

He recognises the contribution the school makes to the spiritual and moral development of the children as it supports them on their journey of faith.

The parish priest works closely with the school and gives effective spiritual leadership and guidance. Since he moved to the parish he has further developed links between the parish and school communities. He has valuable insight into the contribution Catholic schools should be making to social cohesion, particularly in the area of racial justice and drives development in this area.

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

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

The quality of collective worship is good. It makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the children. A policy for collective worship is in place which is supported by a clear plan linked to the liturgical year of the Church. This policy is reviewed regularly.

Children go to Mass at the parish church weekly and each key stage two class takes responsibility for preparing the liturgy with the support of the parish priest. For many children this is their only regular experience of Church. Parishioners say how much they enjoy this Mass and comment on how impressed they are by the confidence, reverence and understanding the children show when reading or leading prayer. Parents and carers are regularly invited to collective worship and celebrations in school

Prayer is central to the life of the school. Staff gather in prayer at the start of each day. The reading for the Mass of the day are used and staff are confident in sharing their reflections and thoughts. The children have opportunities for prayer throughout the day and many are able to offer their own spontaneous, thoughtful prayers during these times. The daily acts of collective worship are child centred and appropriate to the age and development of the children. They offer children the opportunity to experience worship through prayer, reflection and music. The special liturgy for Lent is a good example of the quality of collective worship when each class recreates a part of passion story through art, drama and music.

Each classroom has an appropriate focus of worship and children from reception onwards are encouraged to take responsibility for these.

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

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

The quality of pupils' achievement in Religious education overall is good. Pupils enter school well below national expectations in all areas. Many have little experience of Church before starting school. By the time they reach year 6 they have made good progress in Religious Education. Although the standards of

written work are at present variable, these are improving. This reflects the standards in written English. However, the children's verbal responses, ability to raise and answer questions, and the work in art and drama seen during the inspection are evidence of the good progress children make in their understanding of their faith. Children's responses often showed great insight and depth of thought. One child said he was interested because he wanted to understand why people put Jesus to death when he had tried to do so much good. Feedback from the Religious Education teachers at feeder secondary school is that they can identify those children who come from St Gerard's by their knowledge and understanding during lessons and their confidence in asking challenging questioning.

The school follows the Diocesan guidelines on assessment and this provides evidence of progress throughout the school. The principles of Assessment for Learning are being developed and have been implemented successfully in some classes.

In order for further improvement to take place, the children need to be given more opportunities for writing in Religious Education. There have been improvements in the quality of marking recently which has led to an improvement in standards. However, the leadership team needs to implement a regular pattern of monitoring to ensure that all staff are working to the same high standard.

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

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

Teaching and learning are good. The majority of lessons observed during the inspection were well paced and engaged the pupils in appropriate learning. Support from teaching assistants is effective in ensuring that all learners are engaged.

Teachers have a good understanding of the Here I am programme and this forms the basis for the Religious Education Curriculum. Work is carefully planned to ensure progression throughout the school. The effective engagement of the visual and kinaesthetic learners and the use of challenging questions, which encourage thinking, are key strengths of teaching. Effective use of talking partners was observed in many classes and this improved the quality of responses from the children. ICT is used throughout the school to support pupils learning. Teachers are creative and imaginative in the tasks they set to assess children's understanding. The drama work carried out with a group of children in year six to explore the character of Zacchaeus was a good example of this.

Parents and carers say they are well informed about Religious Education in school and are encouraged to support their children with their work.

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

The school meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference by ensuring that 10% of curriculum time is devoted to Religious Education. The curriculum is based on the Here I am programme but this is supplemented by a wide range of resources to ensure the curriculum is appropriate for the children in the school. The curriculum also provides opportunities for the children to gain knowledge and understanding of other Christian religions and other world faiths. Recently children too part in a cross curricular project during the arts week which focussed on Asian art, music and dance; the school is exploring ways of developing this good practice through their inter-faith partnership work in the future.

The religious education curriculum is enhanced by a range of curricular and extra curricular activities. The spirited arts week, supported by the Catholic secondary School, has given children opportunities to represent themes from the bible and the teachings of Jesus in painting, sculpture, music and dance. The children participate in fundraising for local, national and international charities and are enthusiastic in this work. They take part in local sporting events

Children say they enjoy their Religious Education lessons and this is because they are given opportunities to think and express their own thoughts and feelings. They say they feel they have a voice in school and they are listened to. There is a successful school council which gives children a voice in decision making.

Relationships between staff and children are a strength of the school and the children say they are well cared for and feel safe at school. Playground leaders and the links made between reception children and year five support the climate of care in the school. There is policy on sex and relationships and the school works with other agencies, such as the school nurse, to support pupils in this area.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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

Leadership and management of religious education are good. The recently appointed subject leader has taken on her role with enthusiasm and commitment. She has is well supported by the headteacher

There is a good policy in place for Religious Education which has been approved by governors. Religious Education is included in the School Improvement Plan and Governors receive regular reports on Religious Education. There is a link governor for the subject.

The subject leader regularly attends diocesan briefings and training and supports

staff in improving the quality of teaching and learning. . A whole school INSET day is part of the regular practice of the school and this takes place within the family of schools which feed into the local Catholic Secondary school.

The subject leader has been involved in monitoring of teaching and learning together with the headteacher and needs to develop this area further to ensure that good practice is shared throughout the school. The new marking and assessment procedures also need to be monitored and their impact on standards of written work evaluated.

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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>Good</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>Good</b>
How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	<b>Good</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 St Gerard's Catholic Primary School or from the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, The Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU Tel: 0114 2566440