

**DIOCESE OF HALLAM SCHOOLS'
DEPARTMENT**



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

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

**ST FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

School URN	106762
Name of Chairman of Governors	Mr Paul Haczynskyj
Name of Headteacher	Mr Nicholas Collins
Date of Inspection	3rd April 2007
Section 48 Inspector	Mrs Gillian Foster

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

Introduction

The Inspection of St Francis Xavier 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.

Description of the school

St Francis Xavier Catholic School was opened in 1932 as a small secondary school. In 1959 it became a primary school. The school is situated just outside the Doncaster town centre and serves the parish of Sacred Heart Balby and part of the parish of St Peter in Chains in the town of Doncaster. The school is situated in a built up area and has a good hard play area but uses a nearby playing field for sports activities. There is a mixed catchment from a variety of homes. Its last Religious Education Inspection (Section 23) took place in July 2003 and its last OFSTED Inspection took place in January 2007. This is a small to average sized primary school with a predominance of White British heritage pupils. Seventy two percent of the children are baptised Catholics. There are seven full time teachers including the headteacher, and one part-time teacher; all the teaching staff are Catholic and three of them hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities managed by staff and enjoyed by the pupils. There are very good links between the school, parents and members of the parish communities. The school is well established in the community and enjoys a reputation for good quality Catholic education and high standards. Parents support the school actively and are well satisfied with the education their children receive at St Francis Xavier.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

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

The effectiveness and efficiency of the provision of Catholic education is good with some outstanding features. The Governing Body is well informed, hard working and active in the life of the school. All members of the Governing Body are committed to promoting and deepening the quality of Catholic education and they fulfil their role of 'critical friend' through offering support and appropriate challenge. The Senior Leadership Team work with enthusiasm to improve the provision of Catholic education, they are greatly assisted in this by the involvement of the priests from both parishes. All the staff are committed to and share the declared and well understood Mission of the school, they are

supportive of each other and act as very good role models for the children. The excellent relationships which exist within the school community promote and strengthen the Catholic ethos. Staff have very high expectations of the pupils and provide a safe, caring and stimulating learning environment where pupils feel happy, valued and respected, pupils respond to this nurturing environment and flourish. The Religious Education curriculum is well delivered, the sound knowledge, understanding and skills the children acquire have a positive impact on their spiritual and moral development and this is a strength of the school. The school is becoming increasingly skilled in self-evaluation and identifying priorities for development. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF), contributed to by members of staff and governors, has identified the following three main areas for development: to strengthen the leadership in Religious Education; to broaden the children's' experience of other faiths by organising visits to places of worship for every class, every year and thirdly to up-date the portfolio of pupils' work to demonstrate effectively cross-curricular links in Religious Education. The Inspector agrees with the school's assessment of priorities and these, together with other issues identified in this report, should be included in the Religious Education section of the School Development Plan.

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

The last Religious Education Inspection took place in July 2003 and the following four areas for development were identified: maintain and extend the high quality of Collective Worship ensuring that all planning of Collective Worship takes into account the guidelines detailed in the excellent Collective Worship policy; to develop the role of the Religious Education co-ordinator to include monitoring and evaluation of planning, teaching and learning and the scrutiny of pupils' work samples; to ensure that good assessment procedures already in place are used consistently throughout the school and that all teachers have a shared understanding of what constitutes effective marking of pupils' work and to ensure that staff come to an agreement about how much written work is appropriate and expected from each age group. All areas identified for development in the last Religious Education Inspection have been addressed with rigour and policies put in place to ensure practice is consistent throughout the school and impacts on pupils' development and progress. The guidelines detailed in the Collective Worship policy are now taken into account in planning all Collective Worship, as a result, Collective Worship is outstanding and makes a positive contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils and has an impact on the whole school community. The role of the Religious Education co-ordinator has been developed as stated but still needs to be further strengthened to include the regular, focused monitoring of teaching and learning. Assessment procedures have been strengthened by involving the children more in the evaluation of their own work and in introducing an effective marking policy used by the whole staff. Assessment is now strong and makes a valuable contribution to the progress made by the children and the standards achieved by them. Staffs' expectations of the quality and quantity of written work is now consistent and understood by all. Written work in Religious Education is treated with the same rigour as work in

other core subjects. The school is to be congratulated on the development of the issues identified in the last Inspection and the impact these have had on moving the school forward.

The capacity to further deepen the quality of Catholic education

The capacity to further deepen the quality of Catholic education is good. The headteacher, actively supported by staff and governors, ensures that the whole life of the school is rooted in prayer and that the vision statement permeates the school. The strong leadership in 'inclusion' focuses on recognising and nurturing children with barriers to learning, whilst providing effectively for those children with strengths. The Religious Education curriculum is given a very high profile and is treated with at least the same rigour as other core subjects. Parents are well supported by the school in developing their children's Religious Education through a variety of leaflets, newsletters and through regular invitations to attend Masses, liturgies and other celebrations; these invitations are also extended to grandparents and parishioners. The SEF gives a clear and realistic analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development which are fed into the School Development Plan (SDP), detailed actions are then developed to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved within realistic timeframes. The SDP is regularly monitored by governors. Staff training is given a high priority and staff training needs are linked to performance management.

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?

Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The governors are totally committed to the mission and vision of the school; they are well informed through regular, realistic and evidenced based reports from the headteacher and especially from their frequent visits to school which include monitoring Collective Worship, standards and progress. They are well equipped to fulfil their role of 'critical friend' and offer support and appropriate challenge. The headteacher, ably and enthusiastically supported by the Senior Management Team, offers strong leadership focused on the school's Catholic mission and all members of staff and members of the community feel part of this mission. Staff are given many opportunities and are well supported in understanding and developing their own faith leading to a confidence in supporting children on their faith journeys. The school is fully inclusive, all children are welcomed and recognised as being children of God and are therefore treated with love and respect. The children are cared for in a happy, caring, safe environment where the school's mission statement 'Let God's love shine in our lives as we care and share and learn together' is lived out on a daily basis. The school is dynamic in identifying priorities for the development of the Catholic life of the school and these are included in the SDP which is rigorously monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL: COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How good is the quality of Collective Worship?

The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding and meets statutory requirements. There is a clear policy for Collective Worship which governors review and evaluate through regular attendance at acts of Collective Worship and liturgical celebrations. The policy contains detailed guidelines which are used by all staff to plan and prepare acts of Collective Worship. Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and the whole community. Collective Worship is always planned within a liturgical framework and follows the Church's liturgical year. The children prepare and lead acts of worship of very high quality, they are eager to participate in them. Parents, carers, grandparents and parishioners attend these celebrations in large numbers and this helps the children to appreciate their own important place in the Church and being part of a worshipping, liturgical community. Children are reverent and prayerful and sing with enthusiasm during these gatherings. Many of the adults who attend these celebrations speak of the impact they have on their own lives and faith. The children are given many opportunities throughout the day for spontaneous prayer and reflection, they use these opportunities well. Collective Worship impacts positively on the 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 largely good and in line with achievement in Literacy. Standards have risen steadily since the last Inspection due in part to the rigorous assessment and marking system now in place throughout the school and the involvement of the children in assessing their own work. Children are set targets and are well supported in achieving them. Staff have high and realistic expectations of attainment and behaviour. Pupils respond well to these expectations. Pupils behaviour is very good; they show enthusiasm and enjoyment of Religious Education lessons and are keen to make progress. Written work is generally good and well presented and children take pride in what they achieve. Children develop knowledge and understanding appropriate to their ages and abilities and almost all make good progress. From the earliest age, children are encouraged to express their views and listen to the views of others; they develop confidence in expressing themselves. Many of the older children show a real maturity in relating the knowledge gained in Religious Education to its impact on their lives and the world in general; they are capable of expressing mature opinions supported by well thought out and evidenced arguments. The children work very well together in partner and group work and are good, independent workers. Pupils with special needs and vulnerable pupils are very well catered for, they are ably supported by dedicated teaching assistants and the Learning Mentor. Together with the well delivered Religious

Education curriculum, the PSHCE curriculum, Circle Time and the effective use of Ethos Statements contribute to the very good spiritual and moral development of the children.

QUALITY OF PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?

Teaching and learning throughout the school is good with some outstanding teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are committed to teaching high quality Religious Education. Staff support each other very well in all aspects of Religious Education. All teachers are confident to teach the 'Here I Am' programme and they plan lessons thoroughly. All teachers share learning objectives with the children at the start of lessons and most review and evaluate the success of these objectives with the children at the end of the lesson. Assessment impacts on teachers' planning so that the needs of all the children are taken into account. Differentiated work is always planned and the level of challenge is appropriate to allow all pupils the opportunity to achieve the targets set for them and make progress. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to allowing children with special needs to access the curriculum and to make good progress. All staff have high expectations of both behaviour and achievement and create good climates for learning in their classrooms which the children respond to well. ICT is used well to support and enrich the Religious Education curriculum. The school plans to further develop existing good practice in planning cross-curricular links to further enrich Religious Education teaching. Religious Education lessons contain elements of reflection and often prayer, this has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of the children and of their understanding of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Very good practice in teaching and learning exists in the school and consideration should be given to sharing and spreading this good practice through focused peer, lesson observations.

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 the learners is outstanding. The Religious Education curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools and meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference by devoting ten percent teaching time to Religious Education. Children acquire a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith and develop an understanding and respect for other faiths and cultures, this will be further strengthened when the planned schedule of visits to other places of worship, is implemented. The teachings of Jesus underpin all the school's efforts to meet the needs of its pupils. Teachers plan many opportunities for children to respond to God's call in school through everyday inter-actions in the classroom, playground and dining room and through encouraging charitable giving and involvement with the local community. Children are encouraged to take

responsibility for themselves and for others where appropriate; the School Council provides an excellent forum for this where the children identify ways of improving life in school and with the support of adults, seek to bring these changes about. The school has an excellent PHSCE policy which supports the Religious Education curriculum very well and adds to the children's understanding of school and wider issues and how they as Christians can impact on God's world. The school is socially inclusive offering equal access of opportunity for all pupils to make progress academically and personally. The school offers outstanding provision to vulnerable pupils in nurturing their self-esteem and breaking down their barriers to learning and self-fulfilment. The partnership with parents/carers is excellent; they are regarded as partners with the school in their children's education and they are kept well informed of what their children are learning and how they can best support them. Relationships throughout the school community are excellent and promote the very strong, caring Christian ethos.

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 in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education is good. The leadership of the subject is strongly focused on the school's Catholic mission, on raising standards and the faith development of the learners. The headteacher and governors, through a Religious Education link governor and a curriculum monitoring committee, ensure that the teaching of Religious Education is a very high priority and that the curriculum is planned for and delivered in a rigorous way. There is a strong sense of mission amongst the staff to deliver high quality Religious Education. The Religious Education Action Plan is written with all staff. The Religious Education co-ordinator has a clearly defined role, she regularly attends co-ordinator meetings organised by the Diocese and disseminates information to the staff through dedicated staff meetings. She is available to support and help staff and she currently monitors planning and children's work. She is well supported in her role by the headteacher. The role of Religious Education co-ordinator now needs to be strengthened to resume regular, planned and focused lesson observations and feedback to enable the identification of priorities for development, to identify training needs of the staff and to share and disseminate the very good practice already existing. School is fully inclusive and welcomes and makes excellent provision for pupils of all abilities and needs. A budget is allocated each year to spend on resources. This money has been well spent and the school is well resourced to deliver the Religious Education curriculum. There are plans in place to further develop resources.

Information about the school

Type of School	Primary, Voluntary Aided
Age profile of Students	3 - 11 years
Number on roll	191 (Including Nursery)
Number of Students on Special Educational Needs Register	35
Number of Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	2
Number of Catholics on roll	138
Number of Other Christian Denominations	31
Number of other Faiths	4
School address	Roberts Road. Balby, Doncaster. DN4 0JN
Telephone Number	01302 344678
Fax Number	01302 342231
Email	admin@xavier.doncaster.sch.uk
Website	www.xavier.doncaster.sch.uk

Summary of Inspection Judgements:	
Overall Effectiveness	GOOD
The Catholic Life of the School	
How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?	OUTSTANDING
How good is the quality of Collective Worship?	OUTSTANDING

Religious Education	
How well do learners achieve in Religious Education?	GOOD
How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?	GOOD
How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	OUTSTANDING
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?	GOOD

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