

DIOCESE OF HALLAM SCHOOLS'
DEPARTMENT



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ST CATHERINE'S CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL, SHEFFIELD

School URN	107112
Name of Chairman of Governors	Mrs Y. Pine
Name of Headteacher	Mrs F. Rigby
Date of Inspection	20 th November 2006
Section 48 Inspector	Mr J. A. Greenwood

"... an enthusiasm for the things of God."

Introduction

The Inspection of St. Catherine'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.

Description of the school

St. Catherine's Catholic Primary School is an average sized school with increasing numbers, serving the parish of St. Catherine's and the surrounding area. Most pupils are of white British heritage, but with a significant number of children from minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average and the number of children who are learning English as an additional language is increasing. The children's attainment on entry is well below the nationally expected level. There are 7 full-time Catholic teachers, 1 of whom holds the CCRS (Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies). The school also benefits from having three Muslim members of staff. The pupil numbers have risen since September 2006, owing to reorganisation within Sheffield. The F2 year (Reception) is now 2 form entry, while the remainder of the year groups are single form classes. New classrooms were added to the school during the summer of 2006. The school also has a 52 place Nursery (F1). 38% of the children are baptised Catholics.

The school is situated some distance from St. Catherine's Catholic Church. The school is well supported by a Parents' Forum and a School/Parish working party.

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 St. Catherine's School is outstanding. The school has a most welcoming, caring environment and its distinctive nature as a Catholic school is clearly apparent alongside the celebration of the multi faith background of the children. The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher (who is also the RE Co-ordinator), Governors and Staff, identify and address areas for development in the Catholic life of the school. The children are well taught and cared for; they participate in excellent liturgies resulting in them developing spiritually and morally and acquiring appropriate religious knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The school's detailed Self Evaluation Form (SEF) and Project Plans for Religious Education and Collective Worship, identify aspects of the school's provision that are being developed. This report recognises the importance of continuing with these developments, i.e. further extending experiences of multi-faith and multi-cultural education, reviewing monitoring, evaluation and review of assessment policy and procedures, using ICT in Religious Education. The school identifies further areas for development as extending the cross-curricular approach to teaching Religious Education, and to build on the work of the School/Parish working party by developing a cohesive approach to the celebration of the Eucharist in Church and in the school.

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

Areas for improvement identified in the last inspection in November, 2001 were to further improve teaching and learning, improve resources in KS1, develop Religious Education in-service and links with Governors, raise Religious Education expenditure, establish policies for Spiritual and Moral development and to produce levelled portfolios of children's work.

Each issue has been dealt with very effectively. Regular monitoring, evaluation and review of Religious Education, increased INSET, including a special 2 day INSET Weekend for all staff with a focus on spirituality, and high quality leadership has led to significant improvements in learning and teaching in Religious Education. The school now has policies for Spiritual and Moral Education and for Collective Worship, which are reviewed regularly. The Governors are well informed through the Headteacher's reports, the curriculum and liturgy committees and visits to the school. Significant expenditure on Religious Education has enabled improved learning experiences in all classes. It has also had a real impact on the quality of the environment. Religious Education is valued in school both as an academic subject and as the main vehicle for PSHE, Circle Time and the sense of ethos and community. The excellent school council also enables the children to contribute to the overall school evaluation processes. The Religious Education Co-ordinator has built up a portfolio of photographs, DVDs, planning sheets, liturgical celebrations, assemblies and samples of curriculum Religious Education materials which demonstrate the diversity and high quality of the children's learning opportunities.

The capacity to further deepen the quality of Catholic education

The detailed SEF and Religious Education Project Plans correctly recognised how the whole school community provides a caring, safe environment with a strong Catholic ethos while recognising and celebrating the diverse nature of the school. The school leadership gives clear direction and there is an exceptionally high level of commitment by the staff with a purposeful and happy working environment. The distance of the parish Church from the school has resulted in the children having fewer Masses but the staff devise imaginative, inspirational, prayerful liturgies for the children and whole community. Areas for further

development are also clearly identified and with the support of School/Parish working party, governors and parents the capacity to further deepen the quality of Catholic Education is very good. Consideration of a programme of Eucharistic celebrations in Church and in the school, in line with the school and liturgical year, could further improve the children's appreciation and understanding of the Catholic faith.

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 of the school is strongly focussed on a clear vision of the school's Catholic mission, with high aspirations for raising standards and promoting the spiritual and moral development of the children. The staff participated in a weekend for Religious Education and attend appropriate courses. The development of Religious Education is reported to the Governors through the Curriculum sub-committee and in the Headteacher's termly report. The Religious Education project plan forms an important part of the overall School Development Plan and gives clear direction. A recently qualified teacher is receiving appropriate support and training to enable her to participate in the leadership of Religious Education and ultimately to become the school's Religious Education Co-ordinator.

Governors are involved in policy reviews, take an active part in the life of the school and have overseen the developments since the last inspection. Governors visit the school regularly and support the school with music and accompany children's visits out of school. Individual Governors are linked to particular classes and try to show a special interest in their classes. Parents value the work of the school and speak particularly highly of the spirituality and ethos in the school and the care given to children from all backgrounds. The Parent Partnership Programmes have been particularly successful and one parent said it was a superb 'bridge' between home and school. Many of the courses on offer give parents the chance to gain qualifications. Early concerns about the growth of the school have been allayed. The Parents' Forum gives all parents the chance to be involved in the life of the school community in many different ways. The parents have been given the chance to complete questionnaires during the year, and one for Year 6 children as they leave the school. These reveal how highly the school is thought of by parents, with many expressing very positive comments. Similarly, the views of the children are sought and responded to through the school council and additional children's questionnaires. Several adult members of the school community reported that their association with St Catherine's School has helped their faith and spirituality to be deepened. The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL: COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How good is the quality of Collective Worship?

The quality of Collective Worship at St. Catherine's School is outstanding. Acts of Worship are held every day either as a whole school, key stage or in class groups. Parents and parishioners are invited to assemblies led by the children. Prayerful Circle Times take place in all classes often inspired by the 'Statements of Belief'. Special assemblies are held at key times of the year, particularly Advent and Lent, when the children take a lead in preparing very effective liturgies incorporating film and PowerPoint presentations. Last year, through the Parish/School Working Party regular Masses were organised every 6 weeks in school to which parishioners were invited. These Eucharistic celebrations enabled members of the Parish to see children fully involved in preparing and participating in worship. This has been difficult to put into place this term, but the resumption of the Working Party should enable the school and parish to put together a definite programme of Masses in school and Church once again.

On Holy Days the junior children attend Mass in Church, taking an active part. However the distance between the Church and the school, particularly given the dangers posed by very busy roads, presents quite a challenge. Many children also attend the special school Sunday parish Masses. A joint school/parish/home programme for sacramental preparation is followed and supported well in the school and by parishioners.

In each classroom there is a prominent Religious Education display and there are appropriate resources for times of worship in the classes. The Year 6 residential retreat incorporates thoughtful liturgies for the children and accompanying staff. The displays in the entrance and around the school are particularly evocative

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

How well do learners achieve in Religious Education?

The children achieve well in Religious Education. Lessons based on the 'Here I Am' programme and other resources incorporate challenging activities and differentiated work. The children make some use of ICT, English and art skills in their work and different approaches are followed within each class taking account of children of all abilities. Good support for individual children with special needs, and small groups of children, is provided by TAs. Children from all ethnic groups and faiths make good progress in Religious Education. The children's knowledge of and respect for faiths other than their own is a significant strength. Pupils and their families learn extremely well from each other. The school recognises the need to monitor the assessment policy and procedures. Staff should also consider looking for more opportunities for cross-curricular Religious Education work. Achievement in Religious Education is good.

QUALITY OF PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?

The children are very polite and welcoming and behaviour is good. Teaching and learning at St. Catherine's School is good. In class the children are attentive and work purposefully on the tasks set. Challenging lessons are followed right from Reception, eg. similarities and differences between a Sikh temple and a Christian Church, through to Year 6, eg. children giving very thoughtful evaluations of the purposes of gifts. Staff have a good knowledge of the 'Here I Am' programme and are well led and supported by a very effective Religious Education Co-ordinator who is also training a colleague in the leadership of Religious Education. Since the Religious Education Co-ordinator is also the Inclusion Manager, she has a very clear view of the needs of all the children. The school has developed a system of monitoring which provides positive ways forward to continually review and improve the teaching and learning of Religious Education. Lessons have clear objectives and are well planned and delivered. Lessons regularly involve discussions, writing accounts and prayers, art work, drama and ICT resulting in dynamic, engaging activities for the children.

Parents are informed of the Religious Education topics to be studied at the beginning of each term through the 'Here I Am' Parents' letter, and are also invited to particular assemblies. Some use is being made of interactive whiteboards and ICT. A particular highlight was the animation and film made last year. Pupils' learning could improve further through incorporating more opportunities for cross-curricular approaches, for example linking some geography work with Religious Education to further support the children's appreciation of other cultures. Building on the link with a school in the developing country of Zambia, could provide even broader teaching and learning opportunities for cross-curricular Religious Education work and possibly fund-raising activities.

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

The school devotes 10% of its curriculum time to Religious Education, fulfilling the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. It has effective policies for Religious Education, Collective Worship and Education for Personal Relationships (EPR). In EPR the school follows the 'In the Beginning' programme. The PSHE work in the school complements and supports the Religious Education and EPR programmes of study. Once a year the school provides a 'Rainbows' group for children affected by loss or bereavement. At St. Catherine's School, the Religious Education curriculum is good as it gives the children a greater knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and makes a significant contribution to the children's spiritual and moral development.

The children are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities to support charities such as the Catholic Caring Services (Good Shepherd Fund), Mission Together, Cafod, Help a Hallam Child, Bluebell Hospice, Children in Need, Comic Relief. The children take a lead in preparing stalls and activities for fund-raising events and fairs.

Parents are welcome visitors to the school and there are very positive relationships within the whole school community. Children with special needs are well cared for and the curriculum support and teaching is organised appropriately to meet their needs. The school has developed good links with neighbouring schools and, following the Diocesan review of Sheffield Catholic schools, St Catherine's has begun collaborating with St Patrick's School through shared senior leadership meetings and office staff working together. There are plans for this to develop further.

A number of children in Year 6 form the 'Job Squad'. During playtimes these children have a variety of tasks including office jobs and helping in the dining area. Some children are play leaders at lunchtimes and strive to involve and care for any children feeling isolated. Along with work which the children do on social and emotional aspects of learning through PSHE, Religious Education, circle time, prayer and worship, this has a positive impact on the tolerance and respect the children have for others, reducing incidents of poor behaviour and parental complaints. Circle time activities and the new school council underline how the views of the children are valued and acted upon. St. Catherine's School is a happy, safe and welcoming place to be.

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 St. Catherine's School is outstanding. The SEF and Religious Education Action Plan are detailed documents which reflect the current good practice but also give clear direction for further development of the Catholic life of the school. Children's work is monitored with assessments moderated within school. The assessment procedures are well established, but the school staff have welcomed the opportunity to review their policy in the light of new guidelines and are seeking to continually evaluate their practice. Religious Education lessons are observed and the staff discuss their findings openly. When appropriate, Religious Education is included in individual teachers' performance management targets. CPD needs are identified and met. The Religious Education Co-ordinator gives support and help to all members of staff. Information from Diocesan meetings is shared at staff meetings and planning is discussed and co-ordinated.

The school leadership has worked hard to make the environment of St. Catherine's School safe and fit for purpose. The Quiet Garden, the classroom, hall and entrance displays all make a positive contribution to the children's achievement in Religious Education by reflecting the importance the school leadership places on developing a Catholic ethos.

Information about the school

Type of School	Primary, Voluntary Aided
Age profile of Students	3 – 11
Number on roll	267
Number of Students on Special Educational Needs Register	69
Number of Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	5
Number of Catholics on roll	101
Number of Other Christian Denominations	103
Number of other Faiths	41
School address	Firshill Crescent Sheffield S4 7BX
Telephone Number	0114 2421177
Fax Number	0114 2446141
Email	HeadTeacher@ST.Catherines.sheffield.sch.uk
Website	

Summary of Inspection Judgements:	
Overall Effectiveness	Outstanding
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?	Good
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?	Outstanding

Further copies of this report are obtainable from St Catherine'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