



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection

### ST FRANCIS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mill Road, Shelfield, Walsall WS4 1RH

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Inspection date 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2016  
Reporting Inspector Sister Susan Collins

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	216
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr Peter Gough
Telephone number	01922 682583
E-mail address	postbox@stfrancis-p.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2011
DFE School Number	335/3322
Unique Reference Number	104239

**Headteacher** Miss Dawn Richards

Previous inspection: 2

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This inspection: 2

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



## Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspector observed teaching across 3 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lessons were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the chair and vice chair of governors, the headteacher and the subject leader, the RE link governor and the parish priest.
- The inspector attended a whole school Mass, a Year 5 liturgy led by some former students who now attend the local Catholic secondary school, and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' achievement and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

## Information about the school

- St Francis Catholic School is slightly smaller than the average sized primary school in the parish of St Francis of Assisi in Shelfield.
- Most of the pupils are of White British origin and speak English as their first language.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils attending the school is currently 42%.
- Around a quarter of the pupils are disadvantaged and under one in ten have special educational needs.
- Attainment on entry is usually low.
- In September 2015, a new head and deputy head were appointed after a period of great instability where Catholic life and RE were not the main focus. In a thank you letter, parents wrote; 'We can already see a big turnaround in the school. It is nice to see faith and order back in the school.'

## Main Findings

- The leadership of the school is very committed because of the faith of the headteacher and her deputy. This permeates every aspect of school life. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are acutely aware of the rising diocesan expectations for Catholic life and RE and have worked tirelessly to raise standards in all areas. Since their appointment the Catholic ethos of the school has been the main focus of development and there has been outstanding progress in the last fifteen months. After some turbulent years, the present staff are committed to supporting the new leadership team to re-instate St Francis as a vibrant Catholic school.
- Pupils' contribution to the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They are involved in the charity fundraising committee; Year 6 led the Rosary Club during

October and May and the Gospel Club to bring gospel stories alive for the younger children.

- Collective worship has become a strength of the school and has been carefully linked to developing the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile and the Jubilee Year of Mercy.
- The Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile is strongly promoted throughout the school through the displays, lessons and collective worship. Children are able to share the virtues they had learnt about in several different contexts.
- Staff are committed in providing inclusive, engaging RE lessons which encourages the pupils to ask questions which give them a deeper understanding of their faith.
- St Francis' school is fully inclusive and provides a loving, caring and secure family atmosphere where relationships are excellent.
- The leaders of the school are aware of the strengths and areas of development for the school in relation to its Catholic life, collective worship and RE.

## **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes**

- The provision and outcomes for pupils in respect of spiritual and moral development are outstanding; collective worship and vocational development are good.
- The school is proud to be a Catholic school and this is clearly promoted in many different ways and anyone who comes into the school is immediately aware of its Catholic ethos. This has been achieved since the appointment of the head teacher and her deputy following a period of great instability.
- Priority has been given by the school in re-establishing prominent prayer areas which reflect the liturgical season and help the children to be reflective. The environment across the school is rich in artefacts, displays and symbols of the faith which all help to support the Catholic life of the school. Pupils, supported by staff have undertaken reviews of the prayer areas using a diocesan monitoring resource in which they have made thoughtful comments.
- The school uses many informal observations of Catholic life and is increasingly introducing more formal processes to monitor the Catholic life of the school. A Jesuit Institute Survey was undertaken in October 2015. From the evaluation of this survey staff decided that the mission of the school should be simplified so that the children could remember and understand it, and that the mission could influence daily life in school. Although the mission is currently displayed in every classroom and around the school, the pupils' understanding of the mission is under developed. The school has accurately identified this as an area for improvement for Catholic life.
- Currently, the school council is given the opportunity to look at ways that the Catholic life of the school can be improved. The pupils have expressed that they would like to be more involved in planning and leading worship.
- Links with the parish community are being strengthened. Parishioners regularly praise the singing at Mass and the behaviour and attitudes of all the children in Church. Children are being encouraged to attend the First Holy Communion Mass the Thanksgiving Mass and Confirmation Masses in the parish and there has been very good attendance at these Masses.
- Pupils' response to, and participation in, collective worship is very good. They show respect and reverence, are keen to take on key roles and sing a wide range of hymns joyfully.

- A prayer audit was undertaken so that staff could see prayer progression across the school. This led to the school following the diocesan guidelines on prayer and prayers being displayed in each classroom. Now the children know appropriate traditional prayers and use a variety of prayer styles through a range of collective worship opportunities.
- Year 5 and 6 pupils attended the Deanery Vocations Mass in Walsall and had the opportunity recently to interview a priest. The subject leader has identified that the pupils' awareness of Christian service and vocation requires further development in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2.
- The school's promotion of the Catholic Pupil Profile has impacted on the positive relationships and exemplary behaviour exhibited by the children. The way they are encouraged and enabled to live out their faith, shows that they thrive in the strong Catholic ethos which is evident throughout the school.

## **LEADERSHIP**

### **Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship**

- Leadership of Catholic life and collective worship is outstanding.
- Through strong leadership Christ has rightly been brought back to the centre of the school and is now the focus of all school life.
- Senior leaders have put into place support for newly qualified and non-Catholic staff which includes attendance at diocesan training. As a result, staff feel well supported as expectations are clear. Supportive documentation collated by the RE subject leader is given to all staff outlining their key responsibilities of preparing worship in a Catholic school.
- The subject leader and the headteacher regularly attend diocesan cluster meetings and have implemented relevant resources suggested by the Primary RE adviser. They hold regular meetings with the staff to share ideas and resources.
- All staff including the headteacher have performance management strategies that are focused on Catholic life and the teaching of RE.
- Improvement planning is detailed with clear time scales; it links closely with outcomes from self-evaluation so everyone is clear about the priorities for development.
- Collective worship is monitored by the headteacher and deputy head with other senior leaders now becoming involved in the monitoring. Staff appreciate and act upon the advice and support they have been given to improve the quality of acts of worship. Parental feedback is requested periodically after specific times of collective worship such as Key Stage 1 prayer services.
- Staff attend meetings, celebrations and different activities that are held a part of the local Catholic cluster and appreciate the strong links they have with the local Catholic Secondary School.
- The governing body has a significant role within the school. They are committed to supporting staff and appreciate the improvements that have been made in the last fifteen months.
- Feedback from the governors shows that they feel welcomed into the school by staff, are very interested in the work of the school and know that the children are a credit in the school and the wider community.
- Governors are involved in monitoring the Catholic life and collective worship of the school in many informal ways and have begun to be more involved in formal processes. The link governor for RE is well informed and has taken part in the ethos walk and reports her findings to the Spiritual and Pastoral Committee which,

in turn reports back to the main governing body. These reports give the governors a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- Leadership of RE is outstanding. Provision and outcomes in RE are good.
- From September 2015 leaders have monitored provision and outcomes for RE through a range of activities including lesson observations, monitoring planning, book scrutinies, learning walks and pupil interviews. This has been undertaken at regular intervals and it has been rigorous in its approach. Strengths and areas for development have been correctly identified and impact arising from the monitoring activities is clearly evident. Book scrutinies over the last year show that some of the issues that were raised in the previous monitoring cycle have been addressed and outcomes for pupils have improved. The monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning by the leadership team of the school has led to the accelerated raising of standards in RE.
- Staff are given individual feedback after monitoring has taken place and this provides invaluable support. Key messages are shared with all staff and senior leaders identify any further support required. Teachers feel well supported by the subject leader. Action is taken promptly where improvement is needed.
- All teaching observed was good or better. A prayerful ethos, which is evident from the outset of each lesson, enables children to know that RE lessons are distinct from other lessons. Teachers' questioning encourages the children to think at a deeper level. In all lessons observed, both staff and children made links to the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile. This is a strong feature across the school.
- Planning is good across the school and in line with diocesan expectations. It is evaluated weekly and takes account of previous learning in setting appropriate learning objectives. As a result pupils are engaged in their learning.
- Pupils are well supported by teaching assistants who reinforce the learning objective and provide additional scaffolding when required.
- Assessment procedures in RE have improved significantly since the last inspection. Formative and summative assessments and unit evaluations are carried out by teachers and this is used to inform future planning and teaching so that it accurately matches children's needs.
- Data is carefully analysed to identify pupils who are underperforming and interventions, when needed, are provided to improve rates of progress.
- From relatively low starting points in Nursery and EYFS, the children make good progress across each key stage and across the whole due to good and outstanding teaching. Consequently, the majority of children are working at or above diocesan expectations.
- Pupils are given more opportunities to self- assess through the use of unit markers and the revised marking policy. Some marking is extending learning and engaging the children in questions about meaning and purpose. This good practice needs to be shared so that there is consistency across the school.
- The RE curriculum is broad and balanced, thoughtfully planned with clear links to the *Curriculum Directory* and the diocesan programme, *Learning and Growing as the People of God*, and is accessible to all.

- The curriculum provides very good opportunities for spiritual, moral development. In order to improve the curriculum, further opportunities for vocational development need to be planned across the school.
- In order to enrich the curriculum further, visits to Catholic places of heritage and subsequently explicit opportunities for the children to gain knowledge about other faiths and cultures will be part of future development.

### **Recommendations**

#### **In order to improve the school should:**

- Provide increased opportunities for pupils of all ages to plan and lead collective worship.
- Review the school's mission so that all children can understand and live it.
- Promote a whole school focus on pupils' vocational development.
- Enrich the curriculum further by planning visits to places of Catholic heritage and subsequently provide opportunities for pupils to gain knowledge about other faiths.