

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



Inspection Report of Denominational Character and Religious Education

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST MARTIN DE PORRES CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pastures Way, Luton, LU4 0PF

DfE School No: 821/3360

URN: 109639

Head Teacher: Mr J Carroll

Chair of Governors: Miss U Madine

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Betts

Associate Inspector: Mrs K Yuen

Date of Inspection: 27 September 2011

Date Report Issued: 12 October 2011

Date of previous Inspection: 19 June 2008

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and in partnership with
Luton Local Authority

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St Martin de Porres is a large two-form entry primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. There are 468 children on roll, 84% of whom are baptised Catholic. 59% of teachers are Catholic. The school serves the parish of St Martin and pupils also attend from further afield. Two thirds of pupils are from a range of ethnic minority groups. The number of children who speak English as an additional language is well above that found in most schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average when compared nationally. The school provides before and after school activities.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school.

Grade: 1

St Martin de Porres School is an outstanding Catholic school. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the school's daily life. The committed leadership of the headteacher and deputy and the excellent work of the pastoral care team are instrumental in effectively promoting a strong spiritual purpose and high quality care and well-being of the whole school community. Pupils are very proud of being part of this Catholic school and highly appreciate the access they have to the pastoral team. Relationships within the school are very good and reflect Christian love and concern for others. The pupils' personal, spiritual and moral development is outstanding and this is reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils explained "Everyone works together well here". Good progress is made by pupils in religious education.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has continued to sustain high quality provision. The issues from the last inspection were related to developing RE (religious education) monitoring and assessment; improving the quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work and improving RE marking. Very good progress has been made in all these areas. Monitoring is now regular and rigorous. RE work is scrutinised to ensure full coverage of the curriculum, as well as a high standard of presentation. The school has made clear improvement to the RE assessment systems. Marking procedures are now in line with those of other core subjects.

The self-evaluation form is comprehensive and accurate. The headteacher and deputy have a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. Regular monitoring and evaluations feed into the school development plan.

The school leadership is totally committed to promoting the Catholic dimension of the school and high quality religious education. All staff are committed to the success of the school and are willing to improve their skills through regular training opportunities. The school encourages staff to undertake national Catholic courses for their own professional development. All staff are supported very well by the RE subject leader team. The governors are very aware of their role to further foster the Catholic life and RE.

The school with its current leadership, governance and Chaplaincy team is totally committed to continue to maintain its effectiveness as a Catholic school. Last year during the secondment of the headteacher, the school's deliverance of very good Catholic education was maintained. RE is now led by a team of two senior staff which ensures maintenance of future practice. Catholic and non-Catholic staff work together in year groups and support each other. The school is part of a strong local Catholic network that provides RE support and training.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Further develop RE moderating procedures to ensure that judgements are consistently linked to attainment targets within national levels of RE expectations.
- Involve pupils more in preparing and planning their own acts of worship.

PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups. Grade 1

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. Pupils appreciate this Catholic community and have a secure sense of their own worth and the worth of others. They know the mission statement and four core values of the school and can describe how they strive to achieve these. They display respect towards each other and to adults and show concern for the well-being of others. They enthusiastically undertake responsibilities such as peer mentors and play leaders and are trained for these roles. Pupils are aware that all children's individual needs can be positively met by a huge range of nurture groups. They are able to gain access to help through the "sharing box". They praise the inclusivity of the school and enjoy learning from other pupils about their traditions, cultures and faiths. Pupils praise the caring attitude of the teachers whom they describe as "friendly and trusting". Pupils' achievements are recognised, praised and valued, a reward being seated on the "top table" along with any visitors. Pupils' views and ideas are sought and taken into account through the School Council.

Pupils respond very well to the prayer life of the school. They understand the importance of prayer and participate with ease and respect. Pupils create their own prayers and can contribute with personal intentions. They enjoy worship and listen very well. The pupils spoke of singing as a really enjoyable part of any assembly. They also mentioned their enjoyment of the calm quiet atmosphere of meditation time. RE lessons usually end with a quiet reflection time for pupils to apply the learning to their own lives and experiences. The prayer life of the school contributes extremely well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. In one class, pupils' thoughts from reflection and prayer times, can be written and displayed on the "spiritual" board.

Chaplaincy provision makes a powerful contribution to the spiritual life and the well-being of the whole community including parents. The members of the team are known well to pupils who value and respond enthusiastically to the extra liturgical experiences and care opportunities provided. They know that chaplaincy is wholeheartedly supported by school leaders. Pupils feel safe and secure in school and understand the procedures to resolve their problems. Pupils are aware that the individual needs of each child are well-catered for by small nurture groups such as friendship groups, St Martin's United and "Rainbows". Parents appreciate the approachability, care and friendliness of all the staff.

Pupils make steady progress in religious literacy in the school. They achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and many exceed this. They enjoy their religious education lessons especially those linked to practical activities such as drama and visits. The attitude of pupils makes a positive contribution to their achievement. They try to produce their best work. Their books are well presented and evidence a range of written tasks and a good coverage of the curriculum. Pupils take a real pride in their spiritual journey journal.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school? Grade 1

The headteacher and deputy are deeply committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school. They communicate a clear vision for the Catholic ethos with pupils' care and well-being paramount. The vision also promotes pupils to take a full part in multicultural society. The school is effectively managed in a way that ensures regular evaluation of its religious life. Attractive displays around school often contributed to by children, confirm the Catholic identity, the school's mission statement and the school's four core Christian values. Leadership promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development very well. The leadership team, the family workers, the learning mentor and other members of the chaplaincy team all contribute to the extremely good partnership between school and home. Parents including those from different cultural backgrounds are helped and supported extremely well. Parents' questionnaires gave evidence of the overwhelmingly positive view they have of the school. The school has close links with the parish.

The religious education subject leaders, one being a member of the senior leadership team, ensure this subject has a high profile across the school. They have a clear knowledge of the strengths of the subject and an appropriate vision for improvement that is linked into the whole school development plan. All aspects of religious education planning, teaching, learning and books are monitored well and formal feedback provided to the staff. The religious education subject leaders provide support and guidance to teachers. A comprehensive induction takes place with any new staff member. Four teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. The budget provided is good and the school has invested in many new materials.

Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are well informed about the work of the school. Governors are supportive, visit the school regularly and some are volunteer helpers. Governors attend the "Parent Voice" meetings to gather their views and opinions. They regularly review the School Development Plan which contains objectives linked to Catholic life and religious education.

The school is a welcoming and inclusive community where all members are respected and valued. "Togetherness" is one of the school's core values which positively impacts attitudes. Through the Catholic identity and the openness of the school's welcome, staff, pupils and families from a variety of cultural backgrounds work in partnership with each other. Diversity is celebrated and parents, local visitors and pupils share their traditions and faiths. Families are welcomed into school for courses, play sessions such as those with the under 3's, and as a meeting venue. Pupils show compassion for others by the extent of their charity work for example for local terminally ill children. The school has very good links with other Catholic schools. Provision for spiritual development effectively provides opportunities for pupils to link the theme with their own experiences. The school participates with parishioners and parents to share celebrations and other events. Pupils learn about other world religions. This develops children's understanding of local beliefs. Pupils have opportunities to work with other children from different faith backgrounds through their links with a local community school.

PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 1

Worship and prayer are integral to the school's life. The new prayer room is viewed by pupils as an excellent asset. Worship is well planned with high quality delivery using visual presentations, artefacts, meditation, and singing to promote pupils' interest and develop their thinking. Worship takes place in class particular as part of RE lessons and the atmosphere created is calm, quiet and reflective. The children learn a variety of traditional prayers. Pupils

prepare and lead house based assemblies. Attractive prayer tables are in each classroom. Chaplaincy provision is outstanding and has a very effective impact on the welfare and spiritual development of staff, parents and children. Regular exchanges of information ensure that communication is very good. All in the school community appreciate the outreach of the chaplaincy work. The older children attend First Friday Mass and contribute to the celebration Masses held in school. The former parish priest made a significant contribution to the school's spiritual life.

The quality of religious education lessons overall is good with many outstanding features being observed. Teachers' knowledge is sound and they plan thoroughly. During the best lessons, teachers used visual presentations and creative activities to motivate pupils to learn, maintained a brisk pace and offered thought provoking questions for discussion. The majority of tasks planned strongly consolidated the learning. Lessons ended well with a reflection linked to the learning objective. In some lessons the pace was slow and challenges for more able children were not included within the planning. Teaching assistants effectively support learning and are skilled at adapting the planning to individual needs of pupils

The quality of the RE curriculum is very good, and suitable for the age and abilities of the learners. It fulfils the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the "Here I Am" programme with some units of "Come and See" being piloted. RE curriculum days are organised and outside expertise invited to deliver workshops. Scripture is used very well during teaching. Pupils are encouraged to become aware of the demands of religious commitment. Religious education is creatively linked to other curriculum areas such as information and communication technology (ICT), literacy, art, drama, and song. Other faiths are studied. The RE curriculum delivered across the whole school contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Attractive religious education displays around school give added value to this core subject.

Assessments take place regularly and are linked to national expectations and levels recorded. Pupils have targets linked to the topic's learning for their own self assessment as well as that undertaken by the teacher. These are at present very broadly linked to levels but not yet to specific attainment targets within each level. Marking is affirmative and for some work next steps suggesting future improvements are set. There is no evidence of these being undertaken to extend the learning. Teacher moderation of judgements is a planned future development.

The inspectors wish to thank the headteacher, deputy, staff and children for their very warm welcome and for contributing to their very enjoyable and interesting visit.