



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Occupation Road, Corby, NN17 1EE

DCSF School No: 928/3509

URN: 134877

Head Teacher: Mrs M Hayes

Chair of Governors: Mr E McCauley

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

Associate Inspector: Mrs M Everington

Date of Inspection: 3 February 2016

Date Report Issued: 4 March 2016

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

Information about the school

Our Lady of Walsingham is a two form entry primary school in Corby, Northamptonshire. It serves the parish of Our Lady of Walsingham Corby, with a few pupils coming from farther afield. There are currently 400 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. About 50% of pupils are of White British Heritage with the rest coming from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Around 58% of pupils are Catholics with the remainder coming from other Christian denominations or other faiths. More than half of the teachers are Catholics as are two thirds of the Teaching Assistants. The proportion of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding is 26%. In March 2015 the school converted to academy status and formed the St Luke Multi Academies Trust with two other local Catholic primary schools.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Causing concern

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

Our Lady of Walsingham is a good Catholic school due to the vision and commitment of the headteacher supported by a strong leadership team. The Catholic ethos is evident in many aspects of school life with prayer and worship being central to its work. Pupils are given opportunities for spiritual and moral development through the curriculum and the wider life of the school. Provision for religious education is good with regular monitoring of teaching, learning, and assessment. Governors are knowledgeable and offer a good level of challenge and support. Pastoral care is very good with a designated Chaplain who is involving pupils in a school chaplaincy group. Relationships within the school and with the parish are very good and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents are very happy with the standard of religious education, the good level of communication and the way the school supports their children's faith journey. Pupils' standards of attainment are good.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2011 identified four areas for development which have all been very well addressed. There are now greatly improved resources in religious education lessons which have included sets of bibles for Key Stage 2 classes. This in turn has led to focused teaching on the scriptures and pupils' increased familiarity with both Old and New Testaments. Frequent and regular monitoring has ensured that learning is relevant and appropriate to children's needs. There are increased opportunities for contemplative prayer.

The quality of self-evaluation is good. The school documentation is accurate and gives a comprehensive analysis of the Catholic life of the school and religious education. The school leadership gives a high profile to religious education and has put in place strategies to share good practice and support new teachers. The well planned curriculum enables pupils to make connections between faith and their own lives.

The senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. Senior staff are good role models and all staff are encouraged to improve their skills through training and moderating sessions in school. There are plans for joint moderation of pupils' work with other trust schools. The newly appointed Chaplain plays a significant role in the Catholic life of the school.

The current leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community which has grown rapidly in recent years. She is well supported by senior leadership and the religious education subject leader. Governors have a wide range of expertise and many are involved in the everyday life of the school. Systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which are leading to good outcomes for all pupils. The religious education subject leader is well placed to support colleagues and has attended diocesan training linked to 'Come and See' which she has disseminated to all staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to support staff to ensure a higher proportion of lessons are judged to be outstanding.

- Build on the current provision for Chaplaincy, prayer and worship to further develop the Catholic life of the school and involve parents to a greater extent.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupils make a very good contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. Members of the School Council play an active part in school life and older pupils help and support younger ones as playground buddies. Several local, national and international charities are supported throughout the year and there are excellent links with the local parish with pupils acting as altar servers at Sunday Mass. There are also close links with the local St Vincent de Paul Society with plans to involve pupils in a 'Mini Vinnies' group. Pupils show respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is very good and pupils value the sense of security, friendship and community created within the school.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey. They are involved in the preparation for masses and assemblies, an example of which was seen during the inspection. Pupils can talk about scripture stories and have a good grasp of religious terminology appropriate to their ages. Pupils learn the traditional prayers of the Church and are given time for reflection. They are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives. They understand the importance of prayer and participate readily in class and assemblies. Pupils are given opportunities to create their own prayers and examples were seen during the inspection. They are familiar with the school motto, 'Hand in hand with God, we love, live and learn.

Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in Year 3 and Confirmation in Year 6 take place in school with the support of the parish priest. As there is no local Catholic secondary school, pupils are encouraged to join a parish youth group before they disperse at the end of Key Stage 2. Year 6 pupils are taken on pilgrimage to Walsingham as part of their experience of Catholic traditions. Parish links are very good and school premises are often used for church activities.

Chaplaincy provision is very good. The new Chaplain has formed a chaplaincy group of year 6 pupils who have regular meetings to plan liturgies and identify resources to support the Catholic life of the school. Members of the group also ensure the interests of other pupils are taken into account. She has also worked with each class to enable pupils to understand and celebrate the Year of Mercy. Staff and governors work closely together to promote the spiritual and moral development of pupils. High priority is given to the pastoral care of pupils. They feel safe, cared for and know where to go when they need support. They value being in a friendly school where they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents value the care given to their children and the approachability of staff.

Progress in religious education is good. Pupils work with interest and enjoyment. They like their religious education lessons and work well together. They are eager to participate in activities and keen to do well. They have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Lessons observed were well planned with a range of cross curricular activities including role play, art, literacy and computer skills. Workbooks are well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate a varied range of tasks. The school employs a learning Mentor to ensure all groups make good progress. Standards of attainment meet diocesan expectations.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

The headteacher and her team demonstrate very good leadership of the school through the way they promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher communicates a clear Catholic vision to the whole community and is supported in this by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. She has strengthened the process of self-evaluation which is detailed and identifies areas for improvement. The subject leader produces a targeted action plan each year and has a good knowledge of areas for development. She is well placed to support colleagues. Religious education is monitored through planning, workbook scrutiny, teaching and outcomes. The school has put in place strategies to ensure all pupils make good progress including a system to enable progress in religious education across the school to be tracked more accurately. Moderation of pupils' work has strengthened assessment and levelling as the school implements the 'Come and See' religious education programme. Much emphasis is placed on staff development and teachers are encouraged to undertake further training.

Governors work closely with the headteacher and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and meetings with subject leaders as well as visits to school events. The link governor for religious education is a member of the school staff and the chaplaincy committee. Several governors visit frequently and are involved in school activities. They access training provided by the diocese which has enabled them to evaluate all aspects of the religious life of the school and to challenge and support effectively.

Leadership ensures that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils from other faiths are given opportunities to share their traditions. The school participates in local events and there are good links with other schools particularly those in St Luke's trust. Parish links are excellent. Other faiths are taught well and visits are made to a mosque and a Hindu temple. A good range of charities including Cafod, Mary's Meals, Children in Need and Disaster appeals are supported throughout the year as well as contributions to local food banks. Pupils are given opportunities to develop a sense of service and show compassion for others. Provision for spiritual development ensures that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. The school has appointed a member of staff to promote parental engagement with the Catholic life of the school through attendance at school events, masses and assemblies. Parents are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress as well as the curriculum information letters which enable them to support their children's learning.

Provision

Grade 2

Provision for prayer, worship and chaplaincy at Our Lady of Walsingham is good. Assemblies and liturgies are well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They include visual presentations, bible readings, drama, singing and music. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection. Each classroom has a prayer focus with religious artefacts which often includes children's work. Masses are celebrated in school and parish throughout the year and the traditions of the Church are explored with pupils. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and pupils visit the church. Pupils lead the Christmas Eve Mass with readings, prayers and hymns. The parish priest supports the school through masses, liturgies and classroom visits. There are plans to develop a prayer garden for class and individual pupil's use.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or outstanding. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and an interesting range of activities. Pupils work well and make good progress. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and respond to opportunities to extend knowledge and develop understanding. In an outstanding Year 2 lesson, a re-enactment of the Last Supper enabled pupils to link parts of the Mass to gospel readings. Very good support by teaching assistants is a feature of many lessons. Marking is positive and the best examples include suggestions of ways to improve and next steps in learning. There is evidence to indicate that standards are likely to be maintained or improve.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The programme 'Come and See' has been implemented throughout the school and is now embedded. Senior staff give religious education a central place in the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the good level of resources and time devoted to it. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development.

The school is constantly seeking to develop practice to improve outcomes for pupils. The subject leader has reviewed the assessment procedures which she has disseminated to all staff. Teachers assess attainment and progress three times a year. There is evidence that current good outcomes for pupils are likely to be maintained or improved as the school consolidates and builds on current good practice in all areas.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.