



**INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL
CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

**ST GREGORY'S VOLUNTARY AIDED
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Grange Road, Northampton, NN3 2AX

DfE School No: 928/3354

URN: 122038

Head Teacher: Mrs P Turner

Chair of Governors: Mrs B Behan

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P O'Byrne

Associate Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

Date of Inspection: 10 July 2013

Date report Issued: 29 July 2013

Date of previous Inspection: October 2011

Inspection:

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

Information about the school

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School is a two-form primary school situated in Northampton. A privately run nursery is attached to the school. The school is part of the very recently formed Thomas of Canterbury Federation of Northampton Catholic Schools and serves three parishes, and the surrounding area. There are 411 children on roll of whom 72% are Catholic in Key Stage 2, falling to 57% Key Stage 1. In the last three years there has been an increase in the number of pupils from ethnic minorities and a rise in the number of children eligible for free school meals. The school has a very high percentage of Catholic members of staff but only one has the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Satisfactory 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 3

St Gregory's is a satisfactory Catholic school with some good features. The head teacher, Religious Education (RE) co-ordinator and the chaplain are very effective in promoting the Catholic dimension of the school. Prayer is an integral part of school's daily life and is central to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Pupils behave well, work hard and thrive in a strong Christian community where they feel well supported and safe. Overall, teaching is good but work in some books indicates unsatisfactory teaching.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 3

Since the last inspection, the school has put in place a system for monitoring RE and is introducing 'I can' statements to raise pupil attainment. Work has also been undertaken to agree and level the standards of pupils' work but this needs to be developed further.

Considerable time has been spent on the RE Self Evaluation Form (SEF) but without reference to the inspection framework. Consequently, the self-evaluation within the document confuses some of the sections and the inspectors were unable to concur with the majority of the grades. The RE SEF highlights twelve priorities for future development, none of which reflects the priorities of the head teacher or governor.

The governors and head teacher are committed to improving the school. Its Catholic dimension is strengthened through the very good chaplaincy provision and strong links with the parishes.

The headteacher, RE co-ordinator and chaplain, together with the federation governors, have the capacity to ensure at least satisfactory effectiveness is maintained.

What the school should do to improve further

- Interrogate RE data to ensure assessment accurately reflects pupils' achieved levels of work.
- Continue to monitor teaching and book scrutinies regularly so that planning is effectively implemented and marking is consistent throughout the school.
- Develop communication links with parents to ensure parents are able to be proactive partners in their children's education.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 3

Pupils are friendly and caring, ready to help others; they, in turn, feel valued, safe and well supported. Pupils can discuss the main events in the Church's year, know the mission statement and can talk about the lives of several saints, especially their own class patron.

The prayer life of the school is central to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. They know formal prayers appropriate for their age group and join in the voluntary prayer opportunities. All classrooms have a prayer table, often with a board behind, but a number are cluttered or overlapped by neighbouring tables. Some classes have separate RE display boards which celebrate recent topics: God's Treasures, Stewardship, Common Good and the Seder Meal.

The school has a part-time chaplain who has thirteen chapel monitors from Years 4-6. Pupils respond very well to the activities organised by the chaplain and chapel monitors, and benefit from the wide range of experiences which enrich the life and work of the school. Access to the chaplain is well established and clearly understood by all, and it is further enhanced by a 'worry box' through which children may express concerns. Pupils enjoy retreats and were enthusiastic about the recent pilgrimage to Walsingham where they had been invited to lead the music. The school choir has recently won the Lady Annaly Award in the hymn singing class of the Northampton Festival of Performing Arts. The choir sings beautifully but this was not reflected by the school, as a whole, during collective worship.

Pupils behave well and they are interested in their RE lessons; they co-operate and work well in pairs and groups. Pupils, generally, have a good attitude to learning but this is not always reflected in their written work. Although there is some underachievement where teaching is less effective, pupils, overall, achieve national expectations at the end of KS1 and KS2.

Leaders and managers

Grade 3

The head teacher has a clear vision for the school but, in the main, shoulders it alone. However, all members of staff clearly promote the Catholic life of the school and are good role models for the pupils, especially during collective worship where they all actively participate. The Catholic mission of the school is explicit. RE is regarded as a core subject with appropriate allocations of money and INSET time.

The RE co-ordinator is enthusiastic and works closely with the chaplain in planning, monitoring and supporting members of staff. The raising attainment plan continues to highlight the areas for improvement from the previous inspection but makes little reference to current RE SEF priorities. The school benefits from a purpose built chapel but, as it is also the chaplain's office and a meeting venue, it does not feel like a special place which is central to the very being of the school.

The new federation of Northampton schools came into being last month. Federation members are drawn from the former governing bodies of the four schools and are aware of their responsibilities. The governor interviewed said communication with parents was a weakness across the federation and he believed it to be true of St Gregory's.

There were few responses to the parents' questionnaire but the majority were supportive and appreciative of the Catholic ethos. However, one parent wrote, "It seems to us that the school is in transition and that there are some areas that need to be improved, eg standards and communications with parents." Although in recent months the school has been unable to access its website, there is no RE curriculum information relating to any part of the current school year and information for parents regarding chapel access is out of date. The school's involvement in charity work is well regarded and very good. The CAFOD regional office is

based in the school and pupils speak enthusiastically about the events they organised to raise money for the charity, especially non-uniform days. They have a clear understanding of fair-trade issues and lovely models of fair-trade cows. Pupils' knowledge of other faiths is developed through RE topics and visitors in collective worship; the most recent being Jo Elijah and Judaism.

Provision

Grade 2

Collective worship is well planned and there is a variety of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer. Masses are celebrated in school for special occasions. The head teacher's collective worship at the start of the week follows the previous Sunday's readings and the Wednesday Word is distributed to families in preparation for the following weekend's liturgy. Being non-class based, the chaplain is available as and when the need arises, and enriches the Catholic life of the school by supporting and nurturing both pupils and staff.

From lessons observed, teaching is good, overall. Lessons are well planned with ICT and the environment being used effectively. RE books have the mission statement on the front cover but when books are completed the mission statement is crossed out. In some year groups, the book scrutiny undertaken by the inspectors showed a lack of differentiation, inconsistency in marking and prompts to help pupils improve their work; end of year levels were not always reflected by the work in books. Reception pupils benefit from a good introduction to school life and they are sensitively prepared for transition to Year 1.

On average, the school devotes 10% of teaching time to RE and is just completing its first year of using "Come and See", the new RE scheme. The school has close links with the parishes where the children join a variety of activities, including leading the Stations of the Cross and joining the May and Corpus Christi processions; the chapel monitors recently led a craft session on a Saturday morning. The curriculum is also enriched through the school's work with CAFOD and the Comenius Project

The school is assessing work according to current diocesan guidance but data is not interrogated so there is a misconception with levelling. Pupils are given a level when, in fact, the work only meets one aspect rather than the majority for a secure level. In some classes pupils are given positive, interactive marking so they are aware of the steps they need to take in order to progress; in others, marking is infrequent and without targets. In five classes, pupils' books showed a good range of activities, coverage and progression, and included extended writing.

The inspectors would like to thank all members of the school community for the warm welcome and hospitality extended during their visit.