



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)
**OUR LADY'S VOLUNTARY AIDED
CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL**
Henshaw Road, Wellingborough, NN8 2BE

DCSF School No 928/3407
URN: 122046

Head Teacher: Mrs S Webb
Chair of Governors: Mrs M Houston

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Basham
Associate Inspectors: Mrs K Yuen and Mrs J
Dowsett

Date of Inspection: 2 October 2013
Date Report Issued: 27 November 2013

Date of previous Inspection: May 2010

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

Information about the school

Our Lady's Catholic Junior School is a two form entry school with 229 pupils, aged from 7 – 11 years, on roll. The school shares its site with St Edmund Campion Church and Our Lady's Infant School. The pupil intake, of which 76% are baptised Catholic, is drawn mainly from the local area with just over half being of White British descent. The remaining pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds; an increasing proportion being of Black African and Eastern European origin. Over two thirds of the staff are Catholic with the percentage of Catholic teaching staff rising since the last inspection.

Key grades for inspection

1. Outstanding 2. Good 3. Requires Improvement 4. Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

Our Lady's Junior School is a good Catholic school. The mission statement 'love one another as I have loved you' is central to school life. The Headteacher is dedicated to promoting the Catholic ethos and community spirit of the school. The excellent chaplaincy support and home/school/parish links contribute greatly to pupils' understanding of the Catholic faith. Parents and children are proud of their school. As one parent commented 'the school family works seamlessly in conjunction with our parish family'. The school environment is well cared for, welcoming and stimulating. Pupils are encouraged to feel special and appreciative of their heritage. Relationships in school and pupil behaviour are very good. Governors are highly skilled and proactive in their work with school improvement. The committed leadership of the Headteacher and Deputy Head, supported by the strong teamwork of staff and governors, now have the capacity to raise standards in teaching and learning so that all children can reach their full potential.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 3

Since the last inspection the new Religious Education programme 'Come and See' has been introduced. The Deputy Headteacher, who is the Religious Education leader, has also put in place an assessment and tracking system to monitor pupil performance and attainment. Staff have undergone training on the delivery of the curriculum but the planning to include differentiation still needs to be developed and refined so that it impacts on outcomes for all pupils. Artefacts have been purchased but further resources to aid learning in the form of Bibles, books and visual aids are still needed.

Priorities for the development of Religious Education have been highlighted in the school's self-evaluation document. Inspectors agree with the targets for improvement which include staff training to ensure a more coherent planning system. The current School Development Plan, however, needs to be more detailed and specific in order to show how these priorities will be delivered, monitored and achieved.

The Headteacher has a clear vision for the Catholic life of the school which includes more opportunities for children to grow spiritually in their Religious Education lessons and improvements to enhance the classroom environment across the school. The Religious Education leader works closely with the Headteacher. She is aware of her role in establishing a more comprehensive Religious Education Action Plan to ensure that all issues identified in the last inspection are now addressed.

A wealth of additional expertise and guidance is provided by the chaplaincy team. Governors are aware of their responsibilities. They visit the school regularly taking part in school celebrations, learning walks and monitoring activities. Although progress since the last inspection has not impacted significantly on raising standards in the teaching and learning of Religious Education, the school is now well placed to move at a more rapid pace to achieve its targets for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

Improve the quality of teaching and learning through:

- the provision of staff training on planning to include differentiated activities
- more rigorous monitoring of classroom practice to ensure children's needs are being met to improve their levels of attainment
- the purchase of modern and relevant Religious Education resources.

Outcomes for Pupils

Grade 2

Pupils understand fully the importance of the school's mission statement. This is evident in the way children behave and treat one another. As one child told an inspector 'God tells us not to judge others as he loves us all'. All children are encouraged to be proud of their heritage and share and celebrate their family roots. The impressive 'One World' display in the hall which includes a photograph of every member of the school community under the heading of their nationality, is evidence of the inclusive nature of the school. Other art work shows children's thumb prints colourfully displayed on a cross with reference to Isaiah 43, helping children to understand how they are all different but special in God's eyes. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in parish and local events. Their views are sought and valued through the governors' questionnaire for pupils.

The parish priest has a very significant impact on children's spiritual development. Pupils benefit from his question and answer sessions and his regular visits to the school. Pupils' prayer life is also enhanced by the opportunity to attend a weekly lunchtime Mass with the Chair of Governors and two members of staff, where they can participate in as many as sixteen different roles and responsibilities. As one parent writes: 'this has enriched and deepened my daughter's faith further'. Yr 3 children have the opportunity to make Rosary Rings for use at home and school. This is a simple but effective way of introducing the children to the Rosary which enables them to celebrate the life of Our Lady. Additional rings are made by the older children to give to parishioners at the weekly lunchtime Mass.

The outstanding chaplaincy provision enables children to understand and participate in the celebrations that occur throughout the liturgical year both in the school and the parish. The activities provided by the parish link worker are exemplary. The Reflective Art prayer group, charity appeals, workshops and liturgies contribute greatly to the lives and well-being of the pupils. Pupils from Yr 6 are currently compiling their own Book of the Rosary using different art techniques which helps them reflect on their school's special prayer.

Pupils behave well in Religious Education lessons. They enjoy using drama and role play which encourages a deeper understanding and insight into the topic. During inspection pupils in one class took part in a 'Hot Seating' activity when they were able to ask searching questions and in a Yr 6 class pupils benefited from making a film about the Prodigal Son which enabled their learning to be real and purposeful. However, when work is not sufficiently challenging or stimulating pupils can become distracted and lose concentration. Where there is insufficient planning for

differentiation, children are not always making the required progress in their Religious Education lessons. Attainment is generally in line with national expectations but falls below this standard when work is not matched to the needs of individual pupils.

Leaders and Managers

Grade 2

The Headteacher actively encourages excellent home/school/parish links. Parent responses to the inspection questionnaire were extremely positive. 'My children often refer to the events in Jesus' life and how they can try to be more like Jesus in their own choices and behaviour' was one parent's response. Governors participate fully in the life of the school. They communicate a shared vision for the future development of Religious Education. A chaplaincy team which comprises the Parish Priest, the Religious Education leader, the parish link and parent link workers, the lay chaplain, Yr 3 teacher and Headteacher meet every term to plan liturgical events and support for the school community. This dedicated team make a powerful contribution to pupils' lives in school.

The Religious Education leader monitors standards by overseeing planning and assessments and by conducting book scrutinies and pupil interviews. She has attended Diocesan training and led in house training for staff on the new curriculum. However, some teachers are not yet planning effectively enough. A more rigorous approach to monitoring and lesson observations would highlight areas for development and future training needs.

The governors have recently reviewed their roles and responsibilities, which has led to a re-organisation and new governors being appointed. There is now a renewed focus and an awareness of their role to provide effective challenge and support. Rigorous monitoring of accountability and standards in Religious Education is a key focus for this academic year. The relationship with North Northants Catholic Schools Partnership has also enabled the Governing Body to secure a shared vision for the future of Catholic Schools.

The school enjoys good relationships with neighbouring schools and other Catholic schools. Pupils have access to a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs and breakfast and after school club provision. Choir members have the opportunity to participate in concerts at the local theatre, entertain the elderly and sing at parish events. Charity appeals are well planned; an example being the 'Cafod Advent Project' with the theme 'Use our hands to do Gods will'. Yr 6 pupils are encouraged to maintain links and feel valued by leaving a lasting gift to the school which they design and make with the help of a visiting artist in residence. The beautiful stain glass windows that can be seen and appreciated by the local community provide a lasting memory of one Yr 6 class. The large colourful youth crosses presented by last year's leavers now adorn the school staffroom and entrance area.

Provision

Grade 3

Pupils appreciate the opportunities provided by the school and chaplaincy team to develop spiritually through prayer. They speak sincerely about the prayer envelope in the hall where they can place their private intentions. In class 3 the children enjoy using their prayer tree during collective worship sessions. Each class has a prayer table but some could be improved by having new resources to engage and stimulate pupils interest. Another example of the input from the parish link worker is the schools 'Candy Cane' Advent tradition. A candy cane is hung on the school Christmas tree for each pupil, labelled with their name. The symbolism is explained with one of these being the J standing for Jesus. Pupils then take this gift home to place on their own tree, as a reminder of the special gifts that they would like to give Jesus. Pupils have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a fortnightly basis. An excellent sacramental programme is in place which gives on-going support for pupils and their families.

The quality of teaching and learning across the school is variable and therefore requires improvement. Teaching is good and at times outstanding when children are motivated and take part in activities that are challenging and appropriate to their needs. In these lessons teachers have high expectations, use relevant resources and the lesson moves at a brisk pace. However, when planning is not detailed enough and does not highlight support for pupils with specific needs, pupils make slow progress. Pupils are not always being encouraged to develop skills of research, investigation and empathy to enable them to achieve higher levels of attainment.

The Religious Education curriculum is allocated the required 10% of teaching time. New resources have enhanced pupils understanding of other faiths, but they still need developing to support all areas of the curriculum. Topics are brought alive through the use of drama, ICT and visits to the local church. The curriculum is complimented by the many opportunities given to pupils to take part in liturgical projects and events.

The school has a consistent approach to tracking and recording pupil progress and attainment. The Religious Education books are marked but the new marking policy, that informs pupils of the next steps for learning, has not yet been incorporated into the Religious Education programme.

Inspectors agree that Our Lady's Catholic Junior School is a thriving, inclusive community with a strong Catholic identity. We would like to thank the children, governors and parents for their valuable contribution and the Headteacher and staff for the very warm welcome that we received during our visit to the school.