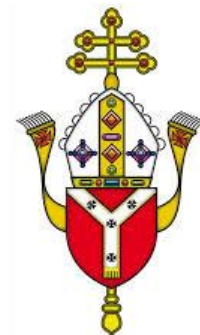


# Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

## St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School



Horseshoe Lane, Garston, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 7HP

Date of inspection: 6 November 2015

### A. Classroom Religious Education

**What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?**

**Overall Grade 2**

Overall, the effectiveness of classroom religious education is good. The quality of teaching is typically good and sometimes very good, and leads to pupils making good progress over time. As a result of the very supportive and caring ethos within the school, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Regular training events both within the Diocese and in school, ensures staff are kept up to date with the latest development in the teaching of religious education. These are much appreciated by new and more experienced staff alike. The headteacher, together with the subject leader and deputy subject leaders for RE have worked effectively to ensure the content of religious education lessons are carefully linked to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The quality of learning in religious education lessons is monitored regularly. Pupils' work is moderated every half-term to check that the grades teachers assign are accurate. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and feel valued. Leaders are striving to ensure that all pupils, and in particular, boys and the most able to achieve the very highest standards in religious education. Governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and show a real willingness to improve their own skills in order to challenge and support leaders so that all children can achieve as well as they should. Religious education makes a strong contribution to the Catholic life of the school.

### B. The Catholic Life of the School

**What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?**

**Overall Grade 1**

The school provides an excellent Catholic education. Its mission statement, 'Live, love and learn joyfully together through Jesus and his Church', echoes the vision of the founding Order of Dominican Sisters. Worship and prayer are clearly central to the life of the school. The quality of worship and the presentation of the Catholic life, is vibrant and dynamic. The Catholicity Committee made up of pupils, school leaders and governors offers an opportunity to reflect and celebrate the call to life-long discipleship. Classrooms, the Sacred Space and the Prayer Garden all seek to articulate the Gospel call to human flourishing and to live joyfully the life of Jesus. The school has formed strong partnerships with the parish and deanery, and works collaboratively with the Diocese. The pupils spoke eloquently of their school's distinctive Catholic identity and commitment to the Common Good through fundraising for international, national and local charities. School leaders actively encourage the whole community to be articulate in prayer, to participate through silence and encourage personal reflection. Also, they encourage pupils to be open to the witness and example of those of other faiths who travel with us and who now form part of the school's distinctive and diverse community.

## Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited nine lessons, one act of worship, carried out one learning walk with the headteacher, and held interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, the scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School, Garston was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

### Inspection Team

Mr David Scott	Lead Inspector
Fr Antony Homer	Shadow lead Inspector
Mr Daniel Keane	Associate Inspector

### Description of School

St Catherine of Siena is a one-form entry Catholic Primary School in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Watford. The school serves families from the parish of Our Lady & St Michael, Garston, Watford. The school converted to an Academy on 1 July 2012, and is sponsored by the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust. The headteacher was appointed in September 2015, having previously been deputy headteacher at the school.

The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 90%, 5% come from other Christian denominations and 5% from other faiths or none. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is approximately 77%. There are 269 pupils on roll, with two pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education, Health & Care Plans (EHC). The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average. Thirty three pupils are eligible for the pupil premium grant which is below average with the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals being well below average. Two members of staff hold the CCRS and another is currently studying for this accreditation.

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DFE Number: 919 5211  
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Headteacher: Miss Nicola Kane  
Chair of Governors: Mr Paul Quinn

Date of previous inspection: 2010  
Previous Inspection grades: Outstanding

**Key for inspection grades:**

<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

## **A. Classroom Religious Education**

*How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?*

### **What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?**

The last Diocesan inspection report identified two improvement points in relation to classroom religious education:

- Enhance the teaching about other faiths by using visits and visitors as extra resources for learning.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to work with those from other faith backgrounds.

Since that time school leaders have strengthened partnership with faith representatives from Islam and Judaism. Pupils have visited different places of worship such as the local mosque and taken part in the school's Muslim Awareness days. In class, children regularly celebrate other festivals such as Ede and Chanukah. Also, links with these and other world faiths have been carefully woven into the schemes of work.

Since the last inspection the make-up of the pupil population has changed. At that time, almost all pupils were Catholic. During the intervening years the population has changed so that 90% of pupils are Catholic, and there has been an increase in the number of pupils from different minority ethnic heritages.

### **How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?**

#### **Grade 2**

The school uses the published scheme, 'Come and See', which is supplemented by material from Dr Margaret Carswell's units of work and the resources produced by CAFOD. Also, the school has adopted the 'Composite Model' ensuring a systematic coverage of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, and provides a very useful framework for the study of the sacramental topics. Through effective training and development the subject leader and deputy subject leader for RE have ensured that lesson planning is carefully cross-referenced to the Curriculum Directory. Additional expertise has been sought from the parish Seminararian, who visits every week and provides invaluable advice, particularly on sacramental issues. Learning resources such as video clips and PowerPoint presentations further enhance pupils' learning. Lesson planning is carefully organised to support pupils' learning as they move through the school.

### **Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education**

#### **Grade 2**

Pupils' achievement is good. By the end of Year 6 their attainment in religious education is broadly in line with other core subjects. During 2014 and 2015, there was a small increase in the number of pupils reaching Levels 4 and 5. However, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 is below other core areas. This was mainly due to teachers being particularly rigorous in deciding when pupils were deemed to be achieving a Level 5. This rigour has been achieved as a result of effective training and moderation in judging when pupils are securely attaining ATI(i). During 2014/15, leaders and governors noticed that Key Stage 1 and 2 boys were not achieving as well as girls, particularly in writing. As a result, leaders have increased boys' engagement in writing by enabling them to complete their work using new technologies. In addition, they have purchased additional resources, to stimulate

boys' learning and to review ways in which boys are taught. Consequently, the gap between boys and girls has closed. Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have made a concerted effort to recruit more male staff into the school. As a result of the school's actions, three male teaching assistants are now teaching, with two now being fully qualified teachers and one, who is completing his training. Pupils' work is internally moderated every half term, with more experienced teachers working with less experienced. External moderation sessions within the diocese, deanery and with one other primary school within the trust, provide opportunity for the sharing of ideas and good practice and ensuring that staff levelling is in line with the agreed understanding of diocesan attainment levels.

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade 2**

Overall, the quality of teaching at both Key Stages, including the early years, is good. Pupils make secure and good progress over time, and in some lessons, they make very good progress. However, the quality of pupils' classroom experience remains variable. Within the school there are pockets of excellent practice. However, this has not been fully shared so that all staff can model best practice in teaching religious education. Feedback to pupils is regular and the recent introduction of assessment stickers appended into pupils' exercise books, is an excellent initiative that is beginning to bear fruit. However, across the school, teachers' feedback to pupils on the quality of their work does not always pinpoint precisely the best way forward for them to improve their work. Throughout the school there is a very positive atmosphere for learning, and pupils are enthusiastic, keen to learn and enjoy their RE lessons. Teachers have secure subject knowledge of scripture which enables them to design well-planned activities that make good use of the bible. These activities are clearly linked to the Curriculum Directory, which is displayed in every classroom, in pupils' religious education exercise books and referred to during lessons. However, not all activities are well matched to pupils' abilities and as a result, not all groups of pupils achieve as well as they should, particularly boys. Also, teachers do not always ask sufficiently probing questions to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in religious education, particularly for the most able. Nevertheless, over time, most pupils make good progress in their knowledge of the Catholic faith and their religious literacy is well developed for their age and ability. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an Additional Language, make particularly strong progress in religious education. Support staff are deployed effectively to help pupils with their learning and to lead small group work. Music, prayer tables and new technologies are used well as effective teaching resources to stimulate pupils' learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and children respond well to the praise and encouragement they are given.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 2**

The leadership of religious education is good and is reflected in the good progress pupils make in the subject. Religious education is led by the subject leader and deputy subject leader, who together with the headteacher and senior leaders, have a clear vision of how to develop the subject across the school. New assessment arrangements in marking have been recently introduced, and while progress has been made, it is too early to judge the full impact of this initiative. Also, the school's self-evaluation of the success of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in religious education, is slightly over generous. The headteacher, together with the subject leader and deputy subject leader, regularly observe religious education lessons and provide staff with feedback. However, records of these visits do not always clearly sign-post what needs to be improved, what training or support will be provided to help the teacher, and the timeframe for improvements to be made. This year the school has been joined by four members of staff who are new to teaching. Leaders recognise that while all new staff have settled in well, more time and training will be needed to ensure their potential is fully developed so that they become excellent practitioners. All new staff receive a comprehensive induction programme, led by the subject leader and deputy subject leader, and have attended the diocesan training for new teachers. Staff regularly undertake joint planning and moderation training, within the

school, with its Trust partner primary school and the diocese. One in three teachers are not Catholic and they are well supported in the delivery of religious education lessons by being partnered-up with more experienced Catholic teachers for mutual support and joint planning sessions. Parish clergy contribute well to religious education as do governors through their membership of the Catholicity sub-committee. The RE link governor conducts joint observations of religious education lessons with senior staff and provides helpful written reports to the governing body. The expertise and skills of the subject leader and deputy subject leader, complement each other well. Together with the headteacher, they form an effective team to promote well religious education across the school.

### **What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?**

- Improve the teaching and pupils' progress still further by ensuring teachers:
  - use more probing questioning to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in religious education, particularly for the most able
  - provide activities that are well matched to pupils' interests and enthusiasms, particularly for boys
  - provide pupils with more consistent feedback on how to improve their work.

## **B. The Catholic life of the school**

*How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?*

### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

There were no recommendations made at the last inspection in regard to the Catholic life of the school. A Catholicity Committee of pupils, staff and governors has been formed with a strong emphasis on the proclamation of faith and celebrating the schools distinctive Catholic identity as a school founded by the Dominican Sisters. This has led to the creation of the school's Sacred Space at the heart of the school as well as forging stronger links with the founding Dominican Sisters at Rosary Priory. The recent celebration of the schools Golden Jubilee Year culminated with a community Mass celebrated by Bishop John Sherrington.

### **The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget**

#### **Grade I**

The school meets and exceeds the Bishops Conference of England and Wales requirement in allocating 10% curriculum time to the teaching of religious education. The subject receives significantly higher funding than other core subjects. Teachers are ably supported by the leader and deputy subject leader for RE, in the delivery of the curriculum. There are many opportunities for staff to enhance their knowledge and expertise through well-considered training and development activities. The leader and deputy subject leader actively support staff in their own spiritual journey of discovery by sponsoring staff through the CCRS programme. Governors are extremely supportive and understand their distinct role in developing and reviewing the place of religious education in the life of the school. The Chair of Governors is currently in formation for the permanent Diaconate. Pupils described the school as being a safe place where each is valued and where staff work with pupils to ensure they learn and feel safe. Parents are wholeheartedly supportive of the school as evinced by the large response to the parental questionnaires with many positive comments. However, a small number of responses noted that religious education homework was often perceived as being too difficult for pupils to complete, without parental support. This was raised with leaders and strategies discussed as to how to proceed and respond to these concerns.

### **The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community**

#### **Grade I**

The school's ethos of care and compassion ensures all pupils are valued and encouraged in their discipleship regardless of their faith or cultural background. Its mission statement, 'Live, love and learn joyfully together through Jesus and his Church', echoes the vision of the founding Order of Dominican Sisters. Worship and prayer are central to the life of St Catherine's. Each class has a designated saint to inspire them and school feast days are celebrated with a special Mass. These class saints were chosen to represent the broad cultural background of the school's children and to inspire them by their teachings and example. The words of Pope Francis in tweets form a number of displays around the school and are used to instruct and to raise questions among the pupils and the whole school community. Key Stage 2 pupils have the opportunity to attend Mass each week within the parish. The Sacrament of Reconciliation in Advent and Lent is also a regular feature of the school's liturgical life. Pupils take an active lead in preparing for these liturgies through selecting the bidding prayers, music and scripture readings. They also take the lead in caring for the prayer areas and displays around the school, which encourage reflection and personal response to the themes and teachings of the Church and the liturgical year. Pupils supported by the members of the Catholicity Committee provide many

opportunities to share their faith with their peers from different year groups. For example, Year 6 pupils take children from the Reception class to visit the Chapel at St. Michael's Catholic High School. Also, children in the early years present their annual Nativity assembly to the Dominican Sisters at Rosary Priory. Pupils are able to experience a variety of different worship styles ranging from class to whole school, which allows for personal reflection and community response.

The Sacred Space and Prayer Garden at the entrance of the school provide quiet places where pupils and staff can be still and reflective, and to offer their intercessions. The plans of the forthcoming Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy will see the Prayer Garden hosting a doorway for Mercy. In addition, the school has a number of plans to encourage pupils to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to go on pilgrimage. Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and areas to be improved. They have good informal arrangements in place to monitor the Catholic life of the school. However, there is scope to strengthen the formal systems for monitoring the Catholic life across the school. This could be achieved by using the same electronic recording system used in the school to track pupil and staff performance. This would help governors to monitor the Catholic life and to judge the success of future liturgical events and celebrations, more effectively.

## **The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice**

### **Grade I**

Pupils at St Catherine's are passionate in their commitment to the Common Good. They put their faith into action through supporting local, national and international charities. The whole school community is encouraged to know and understand the call to justice and service with pupils and families generously responding to crisis appeals like the recent CAFOD Nepal disaster, as well as supporting the annual Poppy Appeal and McMillan Coffee Morning. Pupils were able to articulate well their understanding of the 'Common Good'. Pupils and staff are creative in the various ways they raise money, e.g. the schools 'Bake Off' and wearing something 'Bright for Harvest to brighten the World'. These events are central to the school's mission in helping pupils to understand the call to encourage and nurture human flourishing. Pupils from the Catholicity Committee are actively encouraged to see how they are called to be stewards of creation and of loving their neighbour as themselves. Displays in classrooms and throughout the school serve to underpin this ethos and to encourage the call to service. Partnership working is particularly strong with St Michael's Catholic High School. For example, sixth form students have visited St Catherine's to deliver a unit of work to Year 5 pupils based on Lenten themes. However, leaders acknowledge that opportunities for mutual sharing of best practice with both Catholic and non-Catholic schools to aid pupils' progression to secondary school, are currently underdeveloped. Through the school's weekly achievement assemblies, the talents of each individual pupils are celebrated through awards for academic achievement, personal growth and service. Pupils are also identified who have taken to heart the theme of the week and have put into action the Gospel values, such as compassion and mercy.

## **Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**

### **Grade I**

The Catholicity newspaper together with the partnership days helps to inform parents and carers of the various developments in the Catholic life of the school. The subject leader for RE also sends home a termly newsletter detailing the forthcoming topics each class will be studying, outlining important dates such as Holy Days and feast days and suggesting activities parents might like to use at home with their children to enhance their understanding of what it means to be a Catholic. The school's own website conveys a great deal of information regarding the Catholic life of the school with regular tweets and photographic evidence alerting parents of the work undertaken in class. The school maintains an open-door policy so parents can talk through any pressing issues or concerns. Religious

Education is the first category on the school's end of year report to parents, which signifies its importance and priority. Staff are actively engaged in the life of the local parish and community. For example, by serving on the parish council and assisting with the First Holy Communion programme at Our Lady & St. Michael's Church. The parish priest of Our Lady & St Michaels and the parish Seminarian, are regular visitors to the school, providing support and wise counsel. The headteacher regularly attends deanery meetings and the local cluster of primary schools, as well as hosting events on behalf of the local authority. Teaching staff also attend the bi-annual Deanery Day which provides an opportunity for colleagues to reflect on current practice and to share ideas and resources. Within the diocese, the headteacher and the subject leader for RE have both served as Associate Inspectors. Staff regularly attend diocesan training events, which have included inspection training, and courses for assessing and moderating pupils' work.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school**

#### **Grade I**

The headteacher together with the wholehearted support of her senior team, staff and governors, have ensured that all aspects of the Catholic life of the school are reflected in the school's mission statement, 'Live, love and learn, joyfully together through Jesus and His Church'. This provides a firm foundation for what the school seeks to foster and encourage in the lives of pupils and staff. The quality of school worship, the presentation of the Catholic life as vibrant and dynamic is attractive to all those who engage with it. Leaders actively encourage the whole community to be articulate in prayer, through silence, personal reflection and example. The liturgical year, together with the regular celebration of the Mass, Sacrament of Reconciliation and whole school acts of worship, shape and foster this distinctive community of learners. The broad and distinctive Catholic life experienced by the pupils of St Catherine of Siena Primary School is greatly valued by parents and carers.

### **What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?**

- Strengthen the formal systems for monitoring the Catholic life across the school
- Provide more opportunities for mutual sharing of best practice with both Catholic and non-Catholic schools to aid pupils' progression to secondary school.