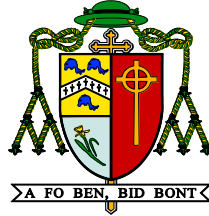


Diocese of Wrexham

in North Wales



INSPECTION REPORT

Saint Helen's Catholic Primary School

Ysgol Santes Helen

Head Teacher: Mrs. Eirian Bradley-Roberts

Chair of governors: Mr. Paul Jenkinson

Date of Inspection: 16th/18th September 2011

Date of previous Inspection: 4th October 2005

Inspector: Mrs. Kathryn Ranson

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Wrexham and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

Introduction

The inspection of the school was carried out by a Diocesan Inspector and a Welsh speaking translator. They visited all religious education lessons and held meetings with the head teacher, the chair of governors, the parish priest and members of staff. They observed the school's work and provision, including prayer and collective worship. They looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's self evaluation, school development plan and pupils' work.

Information about the school

Ysgol Santes Helen is a small Catholic primary school situated in the parish of St David and St. Helen in Caernarfon. The mission statement is "Love thy neighbour". The school draws pupils from a variety of social backgrounds. There are 88 pupils on roll, including nursery, with 30% who are baptised Catholic; 7% of children are eligible for free school meals and 30.7% of children are viewed by the school as having special learning needs, including children whose first language is neither English nor Welsh. Ysgol Santes Helen is the only Catholic school in Wales where the principal language of education is Welsh, a reflection of its contribution at the heart of a mainly Welsh speaking community. It caters for Catholic children, some of whom have moved to the area from different countries, and seeks to provide them with a faith-based education whilst integrating them into the community in which they live.

Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

This is a happy school and close community where staff, parents and the parish work together, for the children. The school makes an active contribution to the life of the parish and the school is supported by the parish priest and community. Children behave well; they enjoy their lessons in religious education and their prayers and activities. The children are now more involved in the planning for prayer, and preparing and leading the collective acts of worship, together with the class teacher. The requirements for collective worship are met and standards are adequate.

In religious education, the standard of work set and reached across the school is adequate but standards vary across the school. Overall, standards in teaching and learning are just adequate. Since the last inspection, assessment procedures in religious education have been introduced but they lack yet the rigour to impact on raising standards. The "I can statements" are not being used and formal assessments are not annotated. The marking of written work needs to be consistent in informing children about what they can do and what they need to do to improve. There are still too few opportunities for children to extend their writing in religious education. Book scrutiny shows that there is a still a lack of challenge for the more able pupils.

While the school has made progress in a few areas needing development its overall improvement since its last inspection is not sufficient. The school's self-evaluation document needs more attention so it will help the school have a clear picture of its work and progress. It needs also to be more evaluative and to reflect more the views of the governors, staff, pupils and school community. Priorities for the improvement of curriculum religious education need to be identified from this self-evaluation and so inform the school development plan. Further, the school's own judgements about the standards and expectations of the children's work need to be more accurate and in line with those of the inspection

Recommendations

R1 Review the Self Evaluation document so that it takes full account of the school as a Catholic school, its needs, priorities and responsibilities.

R2 Set up rigorous systems for assessing, recording, monitoring and evaluating religious education to ensure continuity, progression and raise standards.

R3 Review the school's mission statement so that it truly reflects the work of the school.

KQ1 How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

The pupils' learning and progress are adequate. Evidence from lesson observations during the inspection showed that the children enjoy religious education. The standard of pupils' work recorded in religious education books is adequate overall though written tasks need more variety and challenge, especially for the more able children. The school is providing adequate support for children with special learning needs. Lesson planning has improved but it needs to plan more for children with different abilities and create opportunities for informal assessment. More care must be taken when planning for mixed age groups to ensure every child makes progress. Better use of levels of attainment and systems for more accurate moderating of assessment should be made across the school.

Pupils learn and know about religious practice in the parish and about their community. They cooperate well and behave well with each other. They do particularly well when the school raises funds or organises activities to address the needs of others. The children respond kindly to others outside of school that are less fortunate than themselves.

KQ2 The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

The school makes an important contribution to education and to the community in the area as a Welsh speaking school. It provides a supportive and caring environment for the children who come from a wide range of background and ability. The school believes it offers effective pastoral support and a trustful climate for the children, including the rainbows programme, for bereaved families. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is led well and encouraged across the school by the head teacher and with the help of the parish priest. The religious education programme has appeal for all the children in the school.

Although some good teaching was observed during the inspection, evidence from the children's books suggests that this is not consistent. The judgements made by the school in respect of the quality of teaching and learning in religious education and of the standards reached by the children are not accurate enough.

Currently there is no tracking system in place for the monitoring of pupil achievement in religious education. Formal assessments take place three times a year but this work needs to be annotated. Evidence of informal assessment is limited and early learning goals are not in use. While work has been done to improve assessment and use attainment levels in religious education, this remains a priority for helping to raise standards. Also, the moderation of pupils' work needs more development so that assessment is consistent across the school.

Prayer and Collective Worship have improved since the last inspection. It is now planned, recorded and evaluated by the staff across the school. Focal points are evident in each classroom. The full school act of collective worship was appropriate. The children were respectful and responded well to questions. The

children are now more involved in the planning for prayer, and preparing and leading the collective acts of worship, together with the class teacher. The standards and provision for collective worship are adequate

KQ3 How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

The head teacher makes good provision for the development of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. She ensures that the children have the opportunity to take part in new initiatives and looks for ways to help develop the whole child whatever their academic ability. By becoming involved in as many social and cultural activities as possible the children become more integrated into their Welsh community, whilst practising their faith.

The school has a good relationship with the parish and money is raised for CAFOD & other agencies. The children respond well to opportunities to contact with other people and cultures. They have learnt about life in Malta through contact with a Catholic school. Because the Parish priest and a number of children are from Kerala in India, one of the classes studied India as a topic. This ensured that the children had a better understanding of the differences and similarities between North Wales and Kerala.

Whilst there is a clear commitment to the school as a Catholic school, there is not sufficient focus on the ways that take the school forward. The school's self evaluation has not been given enough time and this is preventing the school from identifying its priorities for development. This raises important matters to be addressed by the leadership of the school and the governing body.

Governors do not currently monitor the standards in religious education and there is little input by them to the self evaluation document. Governors have seen the school's action plan. The lack of a clear tracking system means that religious education is not given the same attention as other core subjects.

The governing body has not yet established a committee for Mission & Purpose whose task is to look at the school as a Catholic school. Governors need also to ensure the regular review of school policies and to update them