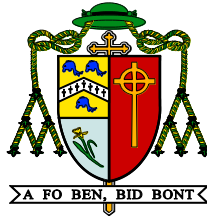


Diocese of Wrexham

in North Wales



INSPECTION REPORT

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Flint CH6 5JZ

Head Teacher: Miss R Molyneux

Chair of Governors: Mr. P Cunningham

Date of Inspection: July 2012

Inspectors: Mrs K Ranson

Mr S Plunkett

BACKGROUND TO THE SECTION 50 INSPECTION.

During each inspection, the inspectors follow the diocesan framework for inspection agreed by the Bishop of Wrexham and held by the Diocese of Wrexham. The inspection looks at the school as a Catholic school required to fulfill its statutory requirements under Section 50 of the School's Inspections Act, 2005 and the school's inspection requirements held under the authority of the Bishop of the Diocese, (Code of Canon Law, Book III: 806).

During each inspection the inspectors will aim to focus on three main questions of the school, as a Catholic school.

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors will provide an overall judgment on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

The inspectors will use a four-point scale and judgment.

What the judgment means

Excellent

Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice

Good

Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement

Adequate

Strengths outweigh areas for improvement

Unsatisfactory

Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

Introduction

The inspection of the school was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors. They visited all religious education lessons and held meetings with the head teacher, the Chair of governors and the Parish Priest. 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.

Context of the School

St Mary's is a large Catholic primary school situated in the parish of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Flint. The mission statement is "We live learn and grow together in Jesus". The school draws pupils from a variety of social backgrounds. There are 301 full time pupils on roll and 41 pupils in the nursery, with 66% of children who are baptised Catholic; 15% of children are eligible for free school meals and 23% of children are viewed by the school as having special learning needs and 18% EAL. The school was inspected in 2006.

Summary of the inspection findings.

St Mary's is a good Catholic school with a shared commitment to Catholic Education. Since the last inspection the school has maintained its standards and built on previous performance. The school's own self evaluation is detailed and accurate. The outcomes for the pupils across the school are good. The outcomes for pupils with additional needs are good and for pupils who have special learning needs. Since the last inspection the school has been successful in addressing the areas it has identified for improvement. The head teacher is highly motivated and committed to the school's success as a Catholic school. She communicates her high expectations to staff in order to secure improvement. Staff are affirmed and supported and any underperformance is challenged.

Overall St Mary's has good capacity for sustained improvement.

Recommendations

In order to make progress, the school needs to:

R1. Raise the standards of attainment in Religious Education further by:

- using the language of the level descriptors when planning and differentiating for groups of children;
- ensuring differentiation is by both task and outcome;
- ensuring that there is sufficient progression and challenge especially for the more able pupils;
- whole school use of driver words in 'next steps' when marking to

inform pupils learning.

R2. Further develop the work being done in assessment, monitoring and tracking of children's progress by:

- improving consistency and rigour of moderation across year groups;
- making more use of information gleaned through analysis of assessment data to inform planning and track pupil progress.

What happens next?

St Mary's School will create an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The Diocese of Wrexham will support and monitor the school's progress.

Key Question 1. How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' achievement in religious education is mainly good. On entry to the school many children have only a limited knowledge and understanding of Catholic belief and practice. The pupils' attainment in religious education is also mainly good. Most groups of pupils make at least good progress relative to their starting points and capabilities. Pupils are keen to do well, are enthusiastic about their learning and work at a good pace. They are reflective and inquiring. The behaviour of the pupils is excellent. Standards reached in religious education at the end of the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 are good and demonstrate positive progression for all pupils, taking into account the high percentage of pupils who have English as an additional language. These pupils are supported very well by effective teaching assistants. The analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate levels for their age and stage of development in each key stage. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are good.

Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity. They are developing the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively. The pupils' enjoy their learning and this is shown in their interest, enthusiasm and behaviour. Pupils are actively involved in developing and evaluating the Catholic character of the school through sharing and living out the mission statement; 'We live, learn and grow together in Jesus'. The Christian ethos is very apparent and care permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils have an excellent sense of belonging to the school community and value and respect others. The children are proud of their school. Pupils are encouraged to take on different roles of responsibility in the school and wider community e.g. as members of the school council, becoming prefects, and playground buddies. Pupils are considerate and caring of others both in school and the wider community. This is evident in their charitable fundraising events in support of CAFOD and Mission Together. The pupils have also benefitted from participation in retreat activities. Pupils have a very good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. The school uses the Rainbows nurture group to good

effect in support of this. Education for personal relationships has fostered positive attitudes in pupils. Pupils take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions. They praise and acknowledge the contribution of others. They show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences.

Pupils are very good in responding to and participating in school prayer and collective worship. They are becoming increasingly more confident preparing and leading acts of worship. This was particularly evident in the upper juniors. Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings. They enjoy their singing, they are able to reflect in silence and they join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence. The pupils show mutual respect.

The pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing and some pupils commented that they "*loved writing and sharing their own prayers*". They are becoming familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures.

Key Question 2. The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education

The quality of teaching generally is good in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and making progress. Teaching takes into account what the pupils have learned already. Teaching now needs to ensure that a range of differentiated tasks are planned so that it consolidates, builds on and extends their knowledge and understanding. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and in pairs as well as collaboratively in small groups. This is supported by the teaching assistants. Good use is made of time and resources for example, with interactive whiteboards, God's and Church's Story, audio and visual media clips. Teachers and others use a variety of strategies to sustain and motivate pupils e.g. with praise and affirmation, role play, rewards, games and questioning. Pupils are informed of their progress orally and through marking. However, marking needs to be more focused on the objectives set and children given next steps in order to challenge thinking and improve standards further. The schools own marking criteria needs to be implemented fully across the whole school and embedded into everyday practice.

The standard of assessment of pupils work in religious education has improved. Assessment systems are in place but the assessment, recording and monitoring of religious education needs to be more rigorous. Pupils have begun to evaluate their success in reaching their targets but its use is not consistent across the school. The school has assessment strategies which provide information on the achievement of all the pupils. Teachers' marking does not consistently inform pupils about how to improve their work. As a result, not all pupils are clear about their next steps for improvement. A consistent system of marking work needs to be established across the school.

Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Diocesan guidance. Assessment information is collated by the subject leader and shared with the leadership team, governors and parents. Achievement and effort are celebrated.

The curriculum is good in meeting pupils' needs. The school uses the 'Here I Am' programme agreed by the Diocese and meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Diocesan requirements. Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to religious education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Planning ensures the full coverage of the programme but more activities need to be provided to extend learning for some able pupils.

The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate. The religious education curriculum provides opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development. Curriculum outlines are provided for parents on the topic being covered.

The school's provision for collective worship is good in reflecting the Catholic character of the school and taking into account the variety of faith backgrounds among the pupils. Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community. Children are enabled to pray formally and informally. The school provides opportunities for staff to develop the skills in planning and leading collective worship. The teachers provide the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship. Opportunities are provided for parents, carers to participate in a variety of celebrations of the 'Here I Am' programme and the Church's liturgical year. The parish priest presides regularly at Mass. .

Key Question 3. How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

The head teacher and senior leaders work hard and effectively promote and develop the Catholic life of the school and show a real understanding of and commitment to the mission of the Church. The head teacher is highly motivated and committed to the school's success as a Catholic school. St Mary's lives out its Mission Statement. All the school community including parents, priest, governors and children were involved in the development of the Mission Statement. Its aims and practical objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life and are a useful tool by which the school evaluates its effectiveness. Opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in the Catholic life and mission of the school. The self evaluation document provides evidence of the schools' analysis and self challenge. Their analysis provides a basis to celebrate the schools strengths and outlines areas for development.

A range of opportunities for spiritual and moral development are provided for staff and pupils. Leaders and managers make use of monitoring data to evaluate the performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements.

The subject leader is very good in guiding religious education. She shows a real commitment both inside and outside of the school to the Church's mission. The parish priest visits the school and appreciates the commitment of the school in nurturing faith and education. He gives full praise for the head teacher and her management of the school.

Governors are satisfactory in fulfilling their responsibilities. They are fully supportive of the school's distinctive Catholic nature. Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school are Catholic and inclusive of the children and their families. There are positive relationships at every level within the school. Leaders and managers facilitate the pupils' involvement in service to the immediate neighbourhood served by the school and the wider community. The use of the 'Here I am' programme promotes community cohesion. Children have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions which helps to promote tolerance and respect.

Partnership and School Community

St Mary's is a welcoming and inclusive school and its strong Catholic ethos ensures that every pupil is valued and fully integrated into the school community. The school draws pupils from a variety of social backgrounds. Gospel values are reflected in the school's happy and caring environment with the aim to help all children enjoy their learning and achieve their full potential.

Parents speak very well of the school and appreciate the care and encouragement their children receive. This was confirmed by the large amount of positive comments on the questionnaires. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and know where to go to ask for help. They like their teachers and know that the staff care about them.