
The Diocese of Hallam Section 48 Report

The Catholic Life of the School and Religious Education

St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

Diocese of Hallam



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ST GERARD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

School URN	3723336
Name of Chair of Governors	Chris McCormac
Name of Head teacher	Bernadette Baxter
Date of inspection	30 th November 2016
Section 48 Inspector	Alan Dewhurst

“ An enthusiasm for the things of God”

Introduction

The Inspection of St Gerard's Catholic Primary School has been carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Diocese of Hallam Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections as approved by the Bishop of Hallam.

The process of inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed as an activity of the Church to support schools in further deepening the quality of Catholic education provided.

Description of the School

St. Gerard's is much smaller than the average-sized primary school which was founded in 1928. Most pupils are White British although increasing numbers are Black African heritage and Eastern European who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. An above average proportion of children have special needs or disabilities.

The published pupils' admission number is 20 although intake continues to fluctuate from year to year. Pupils are taught in five mixed age classes.

Most pupils come from the local parish of St. Gerard's although some children and families have limited involvement or experience of Church before they start school.

Type of School	Catholic Voluntary Academy
Age profile of students	4-11
Number on roll	133
Number of students on Special Needs and Disabilities Register	45 (34.62%)
Number of students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	0
Number of Catholics on roll	81
Number of Other Christian Denominations	33
Number of other Faiths	3
No religious affiliation	16
School Address	Park Nook, Doncaster Road, Thrybergh, Rotherham S65 4AE
Telephone Number	01709 850 568
Fax Number	
Email	St.gerardsc.primary@rotherham.gov.uk
School Website	www.stgerardsprimary.org

SUMMARY JUDGEMENTS

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

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THE PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

1

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

The overall effectiveness judgement is based on all the evidence available.

- Outcomes for pupils,
- The provision for Catholic Education
- Leaders and Managers

Inspection Grades: 1 is Outstanding, 2 is Good, 3 requires improvement in order to be good, 4 is Inadequate

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking into account variations between groups.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship	2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.

- Pupils are very aware of the religious values lived out in the Catholic ethos of the school, summed up in the vision statement: "With Christ as our teachers, to enable every child to be the Best they can be!"
- From the warm and inclusive daily welcome offered to them and their families from the moment they start school, they are learning how to care for and support each other in class and in the playground. Evidence for the school's strong links with home and families is exemplified in the achievement at 'Gold' level for the Rotherham Charter for Parent and Child Voice award.
- Pupils are keen to participate in all of the opportunities the school offers to put faith into action, and they get excellent personal development from the many facets of the school's Catholic life. They love to take on responsibility, for example as school councillors or prayer leaders, and recognise that the main reason for doing so is to help others and to work towards the common good. As one pupil expressed it, they want to "stand up and be counted".
- Pupils have been involved in many fundraising and charity initiatives, carefully chosen to help them appreciate the needs of others less fortunate and to learn how to take positive action, such as the 'porridge event' for Mary's Meals, or the current enterprise work to give Christmas CAFOD gifts.
- Parents are warmly appreciative of the benefits this Catholic school brings to their children. They praise its inclusivity, its links with its parish and acknowledge that "above all, the focus of this school is 'Love'". One parent, whose child had recently moved to the school, remarked: "I feel we've just experienced a miracle".
- Pupils are confident about expressing their own views, and in talking about religion. They recognise that the teachings of Jesus are at the heart of how they should act towards others, and they are quick to celebrate the achievements of their peers, for example in the Golden Stars Club or with Certificates of Achievement.
- They value and benefit from the school's parish links, particularly from the weekly Monday Mass, and they give support to parish events and groups, such as the 'Soup Slurpers' for example.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.

- Standards pupils achieve at the end of Key Stage 2 are mostly above average. They show good progress in gaining knowledge and understanding as they move through the school.
- Pupils express a strong interest in Religious Education lessons, especially where teaching is outstanding. They like the opportunity to be creative, to develop independence and to discuss religious matters with partners and in groups. They are keen to study scripture, at an age-appropriate level, and enjoy writing prayers with support. The younger pupils gain from the opportunities to 'play' with models of figures from the bible, acting out religious stories.
- In whole class discussions, pupils are happy to contribute orally, and to answer questions. They are reassured in this by their understanding that "there are no wrong answers".
- They apply themselves well, and cooperate willingly with each other when working collaboratively. Pupils with particular learning needs are very well supported by a learning mentor and teaching assistants.
- Some pupils are hampered in demonstrating their progress because of limitations in literacy, but teachers are working hard to ensure that expectations in Religious Education and in English remain similarly high.
- Achievement would be further enhanced by the sharing of existing best practice in teaching in some classes to ensure it can be a consistent feature across the school.

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship is good.

- Pupils are keen to participate in Collective Worship. They recognise the special nature of prayer and show respect and reverence appropriate to their age.
- With the help of staff, they prepare and lead assemblies or liturgies of the word, with the 'Prayer Leaders' group at the forefront in providing example as "ambassadors of Christ".
- Pupils have a good knowledge of the rituals and form of the Mass, as a result of their participation in the weekly Monday Mass in St Gerard's Church. They play a full part on these occasions, singing, reading to the congregation from scripture or taking up the offertory gifts for example.
- Individual classes take turns to lead assemblies on a planned theme throughout the term, and these are enjoyed by all pupils.
- The school is at an early stage of developing pupils' skills in planning and leading acts of collective worship in class. When planned resources for supporting this activity are implemented, the pupils will no doubt respond with enthusiasm and quickly build their confidence in using a wide variety of prayer.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education.	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning.	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	1

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education is good.

- As a result of careful planning, based on assessment of the pupils' capabilities and prior learning, teaching is effective in enabling pupils to make good progress in Religious Education.
- Teachers utilise the 'Come and See' scheme of work skilfully to engage the pupils and provide appropriate learning activities.
- A significant proportion of teaching is outstanding. This is characterised by very strong relationships between the teacher, teaching assistants and the class, high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and insistence on pupils meeting those expectations. Where teaching is best, the pupils gain from the high level of challenge, the chance to express their learning through independent presentation, the opportunity to work with their peers in carefully structured tasks and frequent opportunities to respond at some length in their writing tasks.
- Outstanding teaching is not yet consistent throughout the school. The school recognises that to achieve this further sharing of best practice would be appropriate.
- Older children respond with impressive creativity, showing great pride in their work and a willingness to discuss religious topics in depth. Younger children gain from the opportunity to reinforce what they have learnt, for instance, through the use of models for acting out religious stories, or the chance to retell stories to others.
- Teaching assistants play an important role in supporting the learning of pupils. They model learning behaviours very effectively and help to keep children focused on learning tasks or through listening.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning is outstanding.

- The school's approach to its provision of the Religious Education Curriculum is considered and creative. The 'Come and See' programme is fully implemented in all classes, and staff seek to enhance the programme with a range of supplementary activities and events. They constantly seek to make the curriculum relevant to their pupils so that they will make links between the knowledge and concepts studied and their own lives.
- The school has ensured that all teachers are equipped with the right resources and adequately supported in their work. This can be seen for example in the thoughtful assignment of teaching assistants to supporting particular pupils, the discussions between staff members about current topics, and the links made to the Collective Worship programme and other areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers have a good understanding of the Religious Education assessment system, and moderation of assessment levels has taken place with other local Catholic schools to ensure that judgements are valid.
- The curriculum is enhanced through special events or visits to excite pupils and deepen learning. Examples of these are the involvement of the parish priest to answer questions about vocation, a visit by a trainee priest and the headteacher's 'wedding', recreated within school shortly after the real event – a unique event surely!
- The curriculum is used very effectively to support pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development. Pupils are encouraged to consider a wide range of current issues and relate them to Christian teaching.
- Extra-curricular activities also enhance pupils' learning. Partnership with the local Catholic schools learning community is helping the curriculum to be further expanded in new contexts.
- The school fulfils the Bishops' Conference requirements in dedicating 10% of curriculum time to Religious Education.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding.

- Collective worship is central to the life of the school, reflecting its Catholic character confidently and joyfully.
- The regular provision of Mass on a Monday supports those pupils whose families regularly practise, and gives spiritual sustenance to many who would not have access to such opportunities. It is also an example of the close links between school and parish, with open invitation to parents and grandparents.
- Careful planning links the themes of the Mass to displays in the entrance hall of the school, to assemblies and to parish events, increasing the relevance of each activity.

- The school has initiated a group of ‘Prayer Leaders’ among the pupils, selected from those who applied for the post of responsibility, ready to be examples to the rest of the school, and proudly wearing their ‘angel’ badges. This group is learning to assist in a variety of ways the Collective Worship in school, and to guide other pupils in gaining confidence. They have devised a ‘Big Question’ club as a means of discussing their role and learning about faith-related issues.
- The pattern of the liturgical year is celebrated appropriately, and significant feasts within the year are celebrated with special care. For example, “A Journey through Holy Week” helped pupils to remember the events of Christ’s passion through a short ‘pilgrimage’ around the school, stopping at ‘thinking points’ along the way. A similar celebration has also been arranged at the feast of Pentecost. Governors and parishioners have assisted in making these events very special for the pupils.
- Staff members come together for prayer and reflection each morning before the school session starts, acknowledging the importance of worship in their own lives, and helping them to transmit this importance to pupils.
- One day of the residential visit to Thornbridge for older pupils is reserved for a spiritual retreat, which this year was shared with the diocesan ‘In Reality’ team.
- The school takes special care to include and involve those members of its community from other denominations or faiths. These pupils feel valued and participate eagerly as part of the St Gerard’s family.
- The impact of the school’s provision can be seen in the 40 families who attended the recent Christ the King Youth Mass.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective the provision is for Catholic education

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.	1
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How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils is outstanding.

- All involved in the leadership and governance of the school are deeply committed to its Catholic mission in educating its pupils. They all recognise the significance of the school's role in its Catholic community, and how it is supporting families through its provision.
- The Catholic mission of the school is held as the highest priority. This can be seen in school documentation, in the commitment of senior leaders and governors and in the time and care given by all staff to the pupils.
- Governors are well informed about, and actively involved in, the school's Catholic life. They evaluate the school's provision regularly, in order to refresh and renew its mission aims. An 'away day' for governors held recently resulted in a new vision statement for the school to take forward into the academic year, an example of their efforts.
- The Head Teacher is inspirational in her leadership. Her personal example radiates throughout the school, modelling the Catholic ethos that she wants to promote with energy and enthusiasm. She is committed to the school community throughout the week, and then beyond its boundaries at other times. She leads the school in planning its strategic direction, keeping its Catholicity at its heart.
- She is well supported by the senior leadership team, and their united efforts lead to well targeted actions to maintain and improve the Catholic provision. The school is further supported in its drive for the best in its partnership with the St Bernard's Catholic Learning Community. The Chaplaincy Group, formed by representatives of six schools, and led by the headteacher, has formulated exciting plans for future collaboration.
- As a result of this exceptional leadership and management, the school's ethos is understood and appreciated by all staff members, all pupils and their parents. Its effect is that parents feel completely welcome and valued, and grateful for their children's presence in the school.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils is outstanding.

- Leaders and governors have a clear and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths in Religious Education. This results in well targeted planning and strategic action by the school.
- The Religious Education subject leader is very effective in her role, monitoring provision and standards, evaluating strengths and areas for improvement and planning coherently for the future. She supports staff members well, giving appropriate guidance and conveying key information so that they can maintain the quality of provision. She has been pro-active in promoting the subject, attending diocesan training and acting on recommendations, as well as ensuring that new ideas and resources are disseminated to staff. She has also worked in partnership with other schools in order to learn from practice elsewhere.

- Staff are supported and challenged by a rigorous system of monitoring, including lesson observations, book scrutinies and display checklists. As a consequence, outcomes in Religious Education accurately match pupils' abilities.

This final section draws together all the evidence and judgements made in the preceding sections

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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- St Gerard’s Catholic Primary School is, overall, an outstanding Catholic school.
- Outcomes for pupils are good in Religious Education and Collective Worship. However, they benefit from, and contribute to, the Catholic life of the school in outstanding manner. The school presents itself as a truly Christian community, living out the gospel on a daily basis.
- Provision is outstanding overall, with particular strengths in the school’s organisation and implementation of the Religious Education Curriculum and the quality of Collective Worship. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with a number of outstanding examples from which the school can benefit in the sharing of best practice.
- Leaders and Managers promote, monitor and evaluate provision for the Catholic life and Religious Education thoroughly and with excellent commitment, planning and implementing improvement effectively as a result. The Head Teacher, the senior leadership team and the Religious Education subject leader all play very effective roles in ensuring outstanding effectiveness.

Recommendations

In order to continue to improve standards and provision in the school, leaders and governors should:

- Continue to recognise, research and share best practice in the teaching of Religious Education in order to provide for consistently outstanding quality.
- Develop Collective Worship that is planned and led by pupils in order to increase their skill and confidence, and thereby supporting their public and private prayer.
- Raise the achievement of pupils in Religious Education through a balance of high expectations, challenge and creativity, so that all may make outstanding progress.