



July 2015

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

Mr Kevin Kelly
Holy Souls Catholic Primary School
Mallard Close
Acocks Green
Birmingham
B27 6BN

Dear Mr Kelly

Section 48 Monitoring inspection: 11 June 2015

Thank you for the welcome you, your staff and pupils gave to me when I inspected your school on 11th June and for the information you provided both before and during the inspection. I am grateful for the time given by all including the parish priest in speaking with me.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last Section 48 inspection to be an outstanding school and because it is now five years or more since you last received a diocesan inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning for Catholic life and religious education. In order to make this judgement I read school documents, including a summative self-evaluation, interviewed senior leaders, governor representatives, the parish priest and curate and the subject leader for RE. I also interviewed staff members and pupils, observed one lesson, and part of a pupil/parent workshop and looked at a sample of pupils' written work.

Catholic Life

Holy Souls School judges all aspects of its Catholic life to be outstanding. This judgement has been validated during the inspection because it is based on evidence derived from clear processes of self-evaluation. The school is rightly proud of its unique Catholic nature which is evident in all aspects of its daily life and is under constant review, both formal and informal, by senior leaders, governors and staff.

Governors, including the RE link governor, are well-informed and fully involved in all areas of Catholic life, with an individual governor linked to each year group. Regular visitors in school, attending Masses, assemblies and prayer services, governors are able to observe and report on the provision of prayer and collective worship, and how pupils respond and participate. The school self-evaluation document is a working document constantly updated and reviewed. It appears as an agenda item at governors' meetings where sections are reviewed or discussed as appropriate. A review of Catholic life is included in the headteacher's termly report to governors and reports are also received from the curriculum committee which considers matters of mission and Catholic life and has meetings with the RE co-ordinator.

Senior leaders regularly discuss and review how best to preserve and develop the school's distinctive Catholic nature, and the provision and quality of its collective worship. A recent innovation has been the extension of the 'Inspire' workshop programme to include Catholic life. Throughout the year all parents have had the opportunity to come into school and work alongside their children on themes linked to the Gospel of the following Sunday Mass. Attendance at the workshops and the Sunday Mass has been high and feedback from parents has been very positive.

Catholic life is judged against the school mission statement and a 'preferred future' document both of which outline the vision and pastoral mission for the school, passionately promoted by the headteacher and school leaders. Interviews and questionnaires indicate that children enjoy taking part in prayer and worship at school and both they and their parents acknowledge and value the quality



and benefits of the school's Catholic life and collective worship. Monitoring processes for collective worship include feedback to teachers after assemblies and pupil discussion of the Gospel message and meaning following assemblies and school Masses.

Catholic life has been comprehensively reviewed through a series of audits. Each class teacher completed an audit of values, skills, attitudes, knowledge, excellence and enjoyment indicating the characteristics of each of these areas and how they are addressed in his/her teaching. In a separate exercise they each audited all aspects of Catholic life and identified areas to develop. Together they have examined the school's provision of spiritual, moral, vocational, social and cultural education identifying the contribution made by each year group and highlighting examples of good practice. In this context 'British values' have been clearly rooted in Catholic teaching and practice. The headteacher and deputy headteacher hold an annual meeting with the parish priest to review aspects of the school's Catholic life. The programme of collective worship and sacramental provision is discussed and evaluated and provisional plans made for the following year.

The self-evaluation process informs school improvement planning through the RE action plan which is produced by the RE co-ordinator and contains a section on Catholic life. This plan is the first priority of the school development plan and its objectives are regularly reviewed and updated by senior leaders. The outcomes of self-evaluation are also reflected in the Catholic life targets which all staff have as part of their annual performance management arrangements. The target for senior leaders is based on their role in leading and managing a Catholic school

Religious Education

The school's judgement that all aspects of its religious education are outstanding is both accurate and reliable because it is derived from a thorough and comprehensive programme of self-evaluation and review, encompassing pupil attainment and progress, teaching and learning, and curriculum provision. The information obtained helps inform development planning and is reflected in the religious education section of the RE action plan and in the RE targets included in staff performance management.

Assessment against the diocesan attainment targets is built into RE planning and teaching. Pupil attainment and progress are carefully measured for boys and girls and children of all abilities, and ethnicities. In addition to the termly assessments based on a particular assessment focus from the scheme of work, each child's work is formally evaluated for every unit and incorporated into a school portfolio. To ensure assessments are accurate and consistent, samples of pupils' work are moderated within school and together with partner schools.

Observation sheets for each group of children are completed weekly, and 'plan, do and review' tasks are carried out weekly by staff in PPA sessions, in year group teams, with a particular focus on targeted children. In this way attainment and progress are both measured and promoted. Lesson observations, book trawls and pupil interviews provide further information on attainment, progress and the quality of learning. Baseline data and monitoring at the beginning of each year show that children enter school with levels of religious knowledge and experience well below those expected, but go on to make excellent progress as they move through the school. Pupil performance and tracking data are shared with the RE link governor who reports back to the governing body.

The school's judgement that teaching is always good and frequently outstanding is based on a programme of lesson observations, book trawls, learning walks and pupil interviews, as well as reference to pupil performance. After lesson observations, book trawls and learning walks teachers receive individual feedback with recommendations for development; good practice is shared; and any whole school issues identified are included in future CPD planning.

Teaching and learning practice is regularly reviewed and revised. For example recent developments have focused on marking procedures to help pupils know how well they are achieving and how to improve their work. This has resulted in a change to the structure and length of RE lessons to build in time for pupils to respond to the comments made following the previous lesson. These may be written or verbal and will often involve 'gap tasks' to carry learning forward, especially in the development of skills associated with Attainment Target 2, *Learning from Religion*.

The judgement that curriculum provision in RE is outstanding is also supported by constant evaluation and review. The RE co-ordinator monitors long, medium and short-term planning of the diocesan



curriculum, *'Learning and Growing as the People of God,'* to ensure the quality and continuity of delivery, with particular reference to Attainment Target 2. Sex and relationship education and multi-faith provision have been reviewed by the governing body, and recent changes have been made to the school's programme of sacramental preparation following a review which included feedback from parents and pupils. A whole-school review of RE across the curriculum has identified opportunities to teach RE meaningfully through different subject areas.

The school's outstanding commitment to all aspects of Catholic life and RE is reflected in its remarkable record of evangelisation among staff and parents, together with the fact that the RE co-ordinator is the deputy headteacher and a member of staff has responsibility for promoting spiritual, moral and vocational development. With strong leadership and clear vision from the headteacher, RE co-ordinator and senior leaders, supported and challenged by a well-informed, confident governing body, the school has excellent capacity for continued improvement.

In order to support the school in its development I would especially endorse two of the recommendations it has already identified as areas for development in its self-evaluation:

- To develop more opportunities for pupil led collective worship and pupil contribution to school self evaluation
- To improve the governance of RE and Catholic life through developing termly scrutiny of the self evaluation summative document.

Yours sincerely

Denis Cody
Diocesan Inspector