

# St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School

Monkswood Lane, Stevenage SG2 8QJ



Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 3 October 2018

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is good

- Religious education and its teaching are evident in all the learning environments around the school.
- The Religious Education Curriculum Directory forms the integral basis for planning in all religious education lessons.
- In the best lessons, pupils were given work matched to their current ability and prior learning was built on.
- Awe and wonder is appropriately built into lessons and opportunities for prayer are taken.
- Support staff play an important role in directing the learning of the pupils they are working with.
- Pupils show a good and age appropriate knowledge of Bible stories which they are able to bring to discussions.
- Lessons show creativity with drama, art and music all adding to the pupils' experiences.
- Full use is made of the grounds which support learning in religious education.
- Senior leaders have a clear picture of their priorities for improvement.
- Attainment in religious education is in line with other core subjects and has a clear programme of monitoring in place.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and this is reflected in their good behaviour for learning skills.

### Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Assessment is not always used accurately as a tool for deepening learning.
- There are some inconsistencies in marking and questioning.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- It is immediately apparent that this is a school with Christ at the centre. This is evident in the displays, in the environment and in the warm and welcoming relationships modelled by staff and pupils.
- The school gives the full 10% of curriculum time to the teaching of religious education, as required by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school presents pupils with an abundance of opportunities for private and group worship and prayer, marking the liturgical life of the church and many of its celebrations, such as the current Adoremus, Year of the Eucharist.
- The school values are known, understood and lived out by the whole community.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to serve each other, the school and the wider community, developing their own skills and talents in the process.
- The school grounds have been developed to enhance the pupils' opportunity to meet God in his creation. These are easily accessible to all the pupils, who appreciate the care that has gone into them.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- The senior leadership team, supported by the governors, has a clear vision which is well communicated.
- There are strong links with the local parish church and the parish priest is a familiar figure to the pupils through his visits to the school.
- The school supports a variety of charities and responds to requests from the pupils when deciding on these.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, the school has begun to set homework on at least a half termly basis and often send the books home so that families are able to share the learning which has taken place in school. This homework, and other information about religious education (RE), is often sent using the school twitter account or by using the school blog, which are well used by parents.

### The content of classroom religious education is good

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) forms an integral part of planning for RE lessons and is referenced in teachers' planning. Older pupils will highlight which areas of it they have covered, while teachers complete this for younger pupils. 'Curriculum Directory' statement cards are displayed on class prayer tables. The school has mapped their scheme of work to the RECD and are now doing the same with the new Diocesan Age Related Standards in RE. Where gaps in coverage have been identified by this work, the school has used other resources to make sure that all areas are covered to a high enough standard. Religious education is well resourced and pupils have access to a variety of high quality materials and eye-catching displays to enhance their learning. Judaism and Islam are studied throughout the year at different times by different key stages and the teaching is supported through good resources and visits to other places of worship.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupils achieve well in RE and their progress is tracked across the year in line with other core subjects. The school addresses identified weakness, for example using the skilled RE coordinator to support where pupils are not making as much progress as expected. Moderation of achievement within the local deanery and at diocesan level has confirmed the school's own judgements. Where this data is used as starting point for teaching, the pupils are able to make good progress and extend their learning; this needs to be more consistent across the school. All pupils have the new Diocesan Standards in their books to track their progress and older pupils also refer to the Curriculum Directory. Pupils are able to talk about their learning and show a good knowledge of religious stories; in Key Stage 1, pupils looking at prayer through the story of Daniel in the lion's den compared Daniel's prayer with that of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are introduced to the awe and wonder of God in creation and quickly begin to develop a vocabulary for expressing this. Tracking shows good progress across the year for different groups of pupils and support is used well for those pupils who need it. Pupils enjoy their lessons and take care in their work.

### The quality of teaching is good

Teachers show strong subject knowledge and teaching is planned to engage the pupils with a variety of creative approaches including music, art and drama. This creates a positive environment where pupils are keen to do well. In the better lessons, teaching is pitched at a variety of levels, which enabled pupils to move forward quickly in their learning and shows high expectations of the pupils. Modelling is also used so that the pupils are confident in what they are expected to achieve. Where links to prior learning are made, pupils are able to see how their understanding is developing. For example, a previous lesson looking at baptism was used to help understand the role of godparents. Teachers use different questioning techniques during lessons, but do not always use every opportunity to encourage pupils to deepen their understanding through challenging discussions. Books are marked and there is evidence of pupils being given 'next steps' to challenge them. Teachers work to correct misconceptions during lessons, rather than at the end of a piece of work.

Homework has been developed since the last inspection and can take the form of art, research or is used for pre-learning.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education** is outstanding

There is a real drive to keep RE at the heart of the curriculum of the school. The subject leader, strongly supported by the head, senior leadership team and governors, has worked hard to put systems in place for monitoring. She supports her colleagues through formal professional development and by working alongside them. All staff strive to embrace any change which might lead to the improvement of teaching and learning in RE in order to improve the outcomes for the pupils. The school self-evaluation, action plans and development plan all show that there is a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning of RE and set out how to address these. The subject leader is given the time and support needed to carry out her role effectively. This has recently seen her and the school being involved in the pilot for the new Diocesan Age Related Standards. Governors are closely involved in the monitoring of RE through committee meetings and reports from the head teacher. They have a regular programme of visits which gives them a good overview of how the school works. They show a good understanding of standards and are confident to challenge staff and hold them to account.

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

- Further develop questioning in RE to deepen discussions amongst pupils.
- Ensure that tasks given match the pupils' prior learning and move them forward.
- Continue to use existing staff expertise to model good practice.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, the Year 6 'chaplains team' has continued to develop its work, with separate teams covering assemblies, altar serving and the 'Wednesday Word'. The pupils are very aware of the impact their work can have on other pupils in the school and take their responsibilities very seriously. In addition to the Year 6 leaders, the school continues to make all pupils aware of their call to ministry with events like the 'Love in Action' week which focused on Catholic Social Teaching.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

**is outstanding**

The school gives the full 10% of curriculum time to the teaching of RE and this is supported by a generous budget which means that lessons are well resourced and appealing to the pupils. The many high quality displays around the school reflect the school values, prayer intentions, charity work, house saints and pilgrimages. The strong sense of community is further enhanced by preserving the work of previous generations, such as that marking previous whole church events like the years of Jubilee, Faith and Mercy. The outdoor space reflects God's creation with a variety of spaces set aside for quiet or group reflection with different foci such as a fountain or the new statue of Our Lady. Even the 'wiggly path' allows pupils to learn of their stewardship of creation.

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

**is outstanding**

The pupils are presented with many different forms of prayer throughout their time at the school. The altar with its relevant display, placed centrally in the hall, provides a daily reminder to the pupils of the place of prayer in their lives, as well as a place for them to post their own private prayers. They experience a variety of different styles of liturgy, being fortunate to be able to attend Mass both in school and in the parish church. They take part in the Rosary and Stations of the Cross and mark other events in the liturgical year, such as the Corpus Christi procession led by Year 3. All these events are well supported by parents, one of whom commented that their child '... has developed spiritually and morally as a result of her schooling and Catholic education'. Year 5 and 6 pupils are given the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to York to visit the site connected with their patron saint and the pupils spoke excitedly about their experience there. In 2018 they were able to link it to the Cafod 'Share the journey' campaign. The Year 6 'pupil chaplains' deliver sessions to the rest of the classes on the 'Wednesday Word' each week, sharing its message with their peers. Pupils participate joyfully in whole school acts of worship, singing, signing and answering questions with enthusiasm.

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

**is outstanding**

The pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills at serving each other and the community. Year 6 pupils fulfil many leadership roles, including the 'chaplains team', the leadership team and playtime buddies. The school values are the current focus for all members of the community and these have developed naturally from the 'Love in Action' week in summer 2018 when classes explored themes based on the Caritas programme. These have helped the pupils apply what they

learn in their lessons to the world in which they live. The pupils report that there is no bullying; that disagreements are swiftly resolved and that everyone know who they can talk to if they need to. The school has a strong relationships and sex education (RSE) programme, supported by governors, which has been used as a good practice case study by the Diocese of Westminster. The school supports many charities, both local (Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis), national (Poppy appeal) and international (Fr Kakuba's Kanyike project in Uganda). The pupil leadership team helps to decide which charities are chosen and how money will be raised.

**The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**

**is outstanding**

The school plays a central part in the local community. It has strong links with the parish of St Hilda, not only visiting it for Mass but also for special events such as the visit of the relics of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The parish priest is a familiar figure in the school. There are links with the other Catholic parishes from which the pupils come such as supporting their sacramental celebrations. The school makes full use of the services offered by the Diocese of Westminster and contributes to it through work such as the RSE project and the pilot for the Diocesan Age Related Standards. The school is an active member of the strong local deanery group but also participates fully in the local non-Catholic network of schools. Parents are welcomed into the school and appreciate the many opportunities they have to share their pupils' faith journeys at school. 142 parents sent back questionnaires to the Inspection team. They were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and what it does. One commented '... it is clear that they are receiving a strong Catholic Education.'

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

**is outstanding**

The leadership team and governing body show a total commitment to promoting the Catholic life of the school. They have created a community where all stakeholders feel welcome; know that they have a role to play and that they will be listened to. The mission statement and school values are not only displayed around the school, but understood by all and lived out in their daily routines and decision making. They are regularly reviewed and made relevant to the pupils. Pupils are given every opportunity to see what fullness of life can mean and how their own behaviour can contribute to this for themselves and for others. They are encouraged to look outwards from their own community to see the effect they can have in the wider Church. This is a school where everyone is made to feel welcome and part of a thriving Catholic community. As a parent commented, 'You can see from the displays and the care provided that it is a truly Catholic school.'

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

- Continue to develop pupil led liturgies throughout the whole school

## Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Stevenage.
- The school serves the parishes of St Hilda's, Stevenage. St Joseph's Stevenage and St Thomas More, Knebworth.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 97%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 3% and from other faiths is 0 %.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 82 %.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 1.
- There are 12 % of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 6 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average.
- There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 13 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (5 %).

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	9193397
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117474
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 -11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	229
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sally Curtis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Carmela Puccio
<b>Telephone number</b>	01438 352863
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.clitherow.herts.sch.uk">www.clitherow.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@clitherow.herts.sch.uk">admin@clitherow.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 May 2014
<b>Grades from previous inspection:</b>	
<b>Classroom religious education</b>	Outstanding
<b>The Catholic life of the school</b>	Outstanding

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 8 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 1 assembly and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

## Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

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