



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

July 2014

St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Vivian Road
Harborne
Birmingham
B17 0DN

Dear Miss Cusack

Section 48 Monitoring inspection: 8th July 2014

Thank you for the welcome which you, your staff and pupils gave to me when I inspected your school on 8th July, 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, a governor representative, and pupils. I observed 3 part lessons, and looked at a sample of pupils' written work. In addition I attended three types of collective worship and gathered evidence of some of the outstanding practice as part of a diocesan wide survey of Catholic life and religious education.

Catholic Life

The school judges the quality of its Catholic life and collective worship to be outstanding and this is accurate. Self evaluation is based on reliable and effective monitoring processes which are embedded. The school's assessment that its Catholic mission drives and underpins every element of its life and learning is completely reliable. It is evidenced in the deeply held faith commitment of the leadership of the headteacher, her deputy and the governors and the ideals which they hold for the school, which are translated into high expectations for all staff and pupils. The judgement of outstanding is reliable because it is based on effective monitoring and evaluation involving all stakeholders, including the governors who have developed a clear process for collecting and considering views of parents. Teachers check pupils' participation and their response to Catholic life and collective worship. Evidence collected from staff, pupils and parents therefore gives a sound basis for the judgement that Catholic life is outstanding and that it is a real strength of the school. The implementation of the Catholic ethos is a team effort led by the headteacher, and follows from a detailed action plan which is regularly reviewed. Planning involves the active engagement of all staff and the parish priest. There are very good links with the Catholic schools to which pupils transfer.

Collective worship in its differing forms is considered by the school to be outstanding and this is fully justified. It is clear from the pupils' response to collective worship and to different styles of prayer that the school has rightly judged these to be well embedded, for example daily meditation "be still and know that I am God" which is held in each class. Planning for morning prayer class services includes development of pupils' spontaneous prayer, and the need for action to improve this has been identified through evaluation of current practice. This again forms part of the action plan. Provision for family prayer in children's own homes, for a prayer focus in each classroom and other provision around the school in order to inspire children to pray have all been instigated as a result of careful evaluation. The school rightly judges these features of its provision, alongside planning for outreach into the community and fundraising activity as contributing highly to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral and vocational development. Pupils' views on the impact of provision are sought as part of the



programme for improvement, and they evaluate opportunities, especially the biannual Lourdes pilgrimage as very important in their spiritual development. The school benefits from its proximity to the parish church. Pupils and staff are therefore able to use the church regularly and sometimes to attend the daily parish masses and on special occasions. This features in the school's cycle of monitoring, evaluation and planning.

Religious Education

Self evaluation in RE is accurate and reliable in its judgement that teaching and the progress and attainment of pupils in religious education are outstanding. Rigorous monitoring in RE is embedded and feeds into the school action plan for RE. The senior leadership team monitors how well teaching, assessment and the curriculum promote purposeful learning, enjoyment and achievement. They monitor and evaluate the achievement of pupils through scrutiny of lesson planning, lesson observations, informal classroom visits, book trawls, parent and governor discussions and moderations. They analyse the progress and quality of the learning of individuals, different groups of pupils and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Recordings are clear and detailed and based on diocesan assessment. The school rightly judges that all children achieve well, that their knowledge and understanding are excellent and that at the end of each Key Stage attainment and progress are well above diocesan expectations. Self evaluation documentation shows that the senior leadership team knows exactly the standards of RE teaching and learning and what needs to be done to improve standards further. There is no spirit of complacency.

Teaching in RE is recognised by the school's self evaluation as consistently outstanding and this is clearly evident. There is careful analysis of professional needs and the consequent provision of targeted professional training both in school and externally. The subject leader provides excellent support for religious education, motivating both staff and pupils in order to maintain the very high standards she expects at all times. There is planned provision for the support of new staff especially in the areas of lesson planning and assessment. Analysis of pupil response to feedback on their work has led to a policy of all pupils receiving questions which enable them to reflect on their learning and provide further challenge. The school rightly judges this to be a means of providing clear direction for pupils to improve their work, and this is evidenced in their development as well motivated, well behaved and independent learners, with a clear interest in and enjoyment of RE.

Self evaluation indicates that opportunities for spiritual and moral development and vocational awareness are embedded. This is a reliable judgement. The high quality religious education has a clear impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development, and their knowledge of the Catholic faith. The school aims to ensure that this stems from all parts of the school curriculum, that other subjects have sound links to the pupils' work in RE, and that every opportunity is taken to focus on these areas. Around the school and in the classrooms there are some outstanding religious based displays which include high quality written work. The excellent displays of work in art proclaim this school to be a Catholic school. The school rightly sees its provision of a range of enrichment activities as outstanding, and these have been implemented as a result of reviews of the curriculum. Activities are varied and stimulating, particularly those in support of the parish sacramental programme, and they are rightly assessed as having a wide impact on learning. Analysis in the self evaluation documentation indicates that there is little learning about other faiths, and the school addresses the issue to a certain extent in One World Week.

The school self evaluation is clearly accurate. This is an outstanding Catholic school both in its Catholic life, and in the teaching and learning of RE. Analysis of provision and impact, and planning for improvement are enabling it to make constant progress under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, senior leadership and governors.

Yours sincerely

Teresa Quick
Diocesan Inspector