

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



Inspection Report of Denominational Character and Religious Education`

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

DFES School No: 028/3355

URN: 142742

Headteacher: Mr Martin Lowe
Chair of Governors: Mr Jason Osborn

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Marion Betts
Associate Inspector: Mrs Maureen Everington

Date of Inspection: 23rd May 2017

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and in partnership with St Thomas of
Canterbury Catholic Academies Trust

Information about the school

The Good Shepherd is a large two-form entry primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. There are 410 children on roll, 55% of whom are baptised Catholic. 50% of teachers are Catholic. Nearly two thirds of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school serves the parish of St Aidan and the Cathedral of Our Lady and St Thomas but pupils also attend from further afield. In October 2015 Ofsted rated the school as an improving school. At the same time the school joined with other Northampton Catholic schools to become part of an Academy Trust. The headteacher has been in post for 18 months.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school.

Grade 2

The Good Shepherd School is a good school committed to maintaining and improving its Catholic life and religious education. The teachers strive to ensure each pupil achieves their full educational potential. The school has a strong Catholic ethos with a dedicated leadership team. Relationships and respect between all staff and pupils are very good and demonstrate the school's Christian ethos. One pupil explained "we are a loving community here". Worship and prayer are central in the school's life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is very good and this is reflected in their behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils are proud of their school and feel valued, respected and listened to. Religious education (RE) has a high profile and is led by an enthusiastic and dedicated leader who supports and guides teachers well. Pupils make steady progress in this subject throughout their school life.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. The dedicated headteacher and senior staff along with the new links formed, and expertise available, from the Academy Trust, have already set in motion new strategies to develop the school in its Catholic life and RE. Staff are being trained to understand these improvements and their roles in undertaking them. The school has already begun benefitting from initial actions that are taking place and, within time, these improvements will be becoming embedded within school practices. More appropriate improvement developments are being planned.

The school has progressed well with the improvements recommended in the last report. Moderation of pupils' work has been undertaken with the support and guidance of the diocesan RE adviser and pupils' levels of achievement are being assessed more accurately. Systems are now in place to monitor aspects of the school's religious life and RE outcomes through regular book scrutinies; through observing class worship; and through discussions with pupils. Results of this monitoring is shared with teachers and appropriate improvements have been made.

The school's self-evaluation is derived from the monitoring by the headteacher, deputy and RE subject leader who thereby gain a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. Staff, pupils and parents appreciate the values, ethos and pastoral dimensions of the school, exemplified by the recent survey in which 99% of the parents who replied were satisfied that the school promoted Christian values and 94% were happy with the RE curriculum. All staff are willing to improve their skills through training opportunities. The inspectors concurred with the judgements made by the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- increase teachers' RE subject knowledge by regular inset relating to topic preparation with an emphasis on the background and context of both scripture references and the Catholic Church traditions

- improve depth of RE learning by including regularly within marking, challenging improvement points linked to the pupil's next level of attainment and giving them time and support to make these improvements
- undertake RE lesson observations so that effective and enthusiastic learning of all groups of pupils takes place
- develop the school website to more effectively promote the good work done and the richness of the pupils' involvement in the school's Catholic life and so give higher priority to communicating the school's Catholic identity.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupils benefit well from the school's Catholic ethos. Their growing awareness of their Catholic faith is effectively fostered as is their understanding of how to live this out in their lives by following the example of Jesus. This is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils understand the importance of key celebrations throughout the liturgical year. Relationships reflect Christian respect and concern for others. Pupils show an understanding of the need to forgive and mentioned this in relation to one of the school's Christian values and behaviour expectations. They willingly undertake responsibilities and are given opportunities to voice their own opinions through an active school council. Pupils are key decision makers and promoters of many local and global charities and often plan and organise activities to raise money. Pupils praise their teachers who listen to them and make learning fun. Their achievements are recognised and celebrated by the school community.

All pupils respond well to worship and the prayer life of the school. They participate respectfully and with reverence. Worship contributes well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils know a variety of traditional prayers and demonstrate their maturity of thoughts when creating their own prayers, exemplified during the inspection, as pupils prayed for God's presence with other youngsters involved in the distressing current terrorist incident. Pupils enjoy worship especially the hymns and lively action songs which they sing extremely well. They appreciate worship more when visual material and drama is used to enhance the message. By planning and presenting their own class worship in small groups the older pupils are learning the various elements required to produce a worthwhile spiritual experience. A children's chaplaincy team assists in the delivery of liturgies. The team plan and lead prayer groups three times a week which are well supported by other pupils.

Chaplaincy provision has a significant impact on the spiritual and pastoral support of staff and pupils. Pupils feel safe, secure and cared for in school and say that "there is no bullying here". Pupils know that the school places emphasis on saying sorry and forgiving. They are aware of the procedures and personnel to help them resolve any problems. Parents appreciate the school's encouragement for pupils to learn and practise Christian values and develop their faith knowledge.

Pupils make steady progress in RE and the majority achieve the expected levels. RE outcomes compare favourably with other core subjects. Most pupils enjoy their religious education lessons especially when given practical and creative tasks to motivate and consolidate their learning. In one lesson, when the pupils were challenged to explore Paul's positive and negative emotions after Jesus appeared to him, the pupils' oral work evidenced their deep and thoughtful reflections. RE books are well presented and evidence a range of written tasks.

Leaders and managers

Grade 2

The school's Catholic identity permeates its daily life. A clear vision for improvement is effectively demonstrated by the school's determination to take advantage of all development opportunities which the Trust and diocese offer. This is evidenced by the school's action planning when many improvement strategies have begun. The mission statement "Jesus is our Shepherd and our friend" with the clear child-friendly additional statement, is known and understood by the whole school community who strive to live this out in their respect and daily dealings with each other. The leadership know the school's strengths and where improvements are needed and staff are taking on board challenging developments. The new school committee members are kept informed as to the progress of the new initiatives in the school and are beginning to offer supportive insights. One such ongoing initiative is for firmer and more regular links with the parishes and, through persistent outreach, the school is now building stronger relationships with a number of priests and parishes. The school website could more effectively promote the school's work and in particular place higher priority on reflecting the richness of the pupils' involvement in its Catholic identity. Parents responded positively to the inspection questionnaire. They particularly mentioned the friendly and supportive staff and the moral teaching of the school. The commitment of the leadership team effectively promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social development and faith awareness.

The religious education leader is well supported by the senior colleagues to ensure this subject has a raised profile across the school. She is committed and dedicated to her role, undertakes training and provides firm support and guidance to the staff. She conducts a range of monitoring activities including discussions with pupils about their RE learning and she undertakes RE learning walks, but lesson observations with RE as a focus have not taken place recently. Class worship is monitored and improvement suggestions given. RE is well resourced and the budget is in line with that given to other core subjects. Pupils are assessed regularly and RE progress tracked. Judgements are moderated together with the other academy trust schools and the understandings gained are shared within the school. The school committee members have been involved in some of the RE monitoring and receive reports concerning the RE curriculum.

Provision

Grade 2

Worship and prayer are integral to the school's life for both pupils and staff. The new chaplaincy team provide a broad programme of prayer and worship linked to Catholic traditions with opportunities for individual reflective and meditative experiences. They plan to broaden even further the range of experiences for pupils' spiritual development and to invite more visitors to share their Catholic faith. Worship themes reflect the school's Catholic values and the liturgical year. The prayer room provides a sacred space for quiet prayer and reflection. Lenten stations promoted thoughtful reflections during this season. Sacramental preparation takes place within the parishes but a celebration together for all Year 3 pupils is planned to be held soon. Attractive prayer tables effectively provide the focus for class prayer.

The quality of religious education lessons overall is good with some outstanding aspects observed. Where RE lessons were best, clear instructions, visual presentations; imaginative planning; a lively pace; meditation experiences, talking partners; and practical outcomes, were all effectively used to motivate and interest pupils allowing them to want to be engaged and hence work with enthusiasm. Differentiation was mostly by pupils' literacy ability or by outcome, which in some cases caused the more able pupils to be restricted in achieving a greater depth of RE learning. Teachers' RE subject knowledge was occasionally demonstrated to be limited when responding to pupils' questions. The use of bibles was not observed. Teaching assistants gave good support to groups of pupils. Formal assessments are undertaken regularly and linked to national expectations. Marking ensures praise and

encouragement but improvement points were not consistently comprehensive for pupils to achieve better in the future or followed up by pupils' responses.

The quality of the curriculum is good, and suitable for the age and abilities of the learners. It fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following "Come and See" the diocesan directed programme. Pupils are encouraged to become aware of the demands of religious commitment, evidenced in lessons observed when pupils were considering how they would use the gifts the Holy Spirit in everyday life and also how they could spread Jesus' Good News. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Religious education is often linked to other curriculum areas particularly to literacy, drama, song and art. Most pupils' books evidence a good coverage of the curriculum. The curriculum and hall displays raise pupils' awareness of other faiths. Attractive RE displays give added value to this core subject.

The inspectors wish to thank the senior leaders, the religious education lead, staff and children for their very warm welcome and for contributing to their informative and interesting visit.