



**INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL
CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

**ST GREGORY'S VOLUNTARY AIDED
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Grange Road, Northampton, NN3 2AX

DfE School No: 928/3354

URN: 122038

Head Teacher: Mr J Davis

Chair of Governors: Mr H Williams

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

Date of Inspection: 20 June 2016

Date report Issued: **20 July 2016**

Date of previous June 2013

Inspection:

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Northamptonshire Local Authority

Information about the school

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School and Nursery is two form entry situated in the Eastfield district of Northampton. The school is part of the St Thomas of Canterbury Federation of Northampton Catholic Schools and serves three local parishes and the surrounding area. There are 394 pupils on roll of whom 47% are Catholic. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with the remainder from a range of ethnic minorities. Since the last inspection in 2013 the school has had many staff changes including the headteacher and religious education subject leader. Half of the teachers are Catholics but at present none have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Gregory's is a good Catholic school with outstanding leadership and excellent provision for chaplaincy, prayer and collective worship. The head teacher, religious education subject leader and chaplain are very effective in promoting the Catholic life of the school. They are supported in this by staff and the School Committee. Prayer is central to the life of the school and pupils are given many opportunities to plan and lead worship. Religious education and the wider curriculum support the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Behaviour for learning is very good and pupils achieve well and make good progress. Teaching is good and new members of staff are very well supported by the deputy headteacher who is also subject leader. Pastoral care is very good and pupils value being in a friendly environment where they feel supported and safe.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

Since the last inspection, the school has put in place a number of effective strategies to support staff and raise attainment in religious education. These have resulted in a rapid improvement in teaching and learning. Detailed, rigorous monitoring followed by support where needed has ensured that teaching is at least good and pupils' attainment meets diocesan expectations. Moderating sessions to level the standards of pupils' work is leading to greater confidence among teachers. All the recommendations in the last inspection report have been well addressed.

Self-evaluation is accurate and is carefully linked to the current religious education action plan. This is leading to a clear focus on areas for development. Effective tracking of pupils' progress is enabling underachievement to be quickly identified and addressed. A new subject leader for religious education has been appointed for September and is shadowing the deputy headteacher to ensure current good practice is maintained and developed.

Although both headteacher and his deputy will leave at the end of term they have put in place strong systems which should enable current effectiveness to be maintained. Termly liaison meetings with the other partnership schools provide a good level of support. Members of the School Committee know the areas for development well and are committed to improving the school still further. Excellent chaplaincy provision and close links with the parishes strengthen the Catholic life of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- maintain and develop existing good practice in teaching religious education to ensure all pupils meet their full potential
- provide class sets of bibles to ensure pupils have better access to scripture

- review the school mission statement to involve all members of the community including pupils and parents.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They were actively involved in establishing the Emmaus room, the school prayer room which is central to the life of the school. Pupils respond well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community through fundraising for charities including Cafod, the Hope centre and the Karuri School project. They take on responsibilities to show leadership through helping at playtimes and as playground friends. A team of young leaders leads lunchtime sessions for other children and represent the pupil voice regarding Catholicity. There are good links with the local parishes where pupils have led the 'Stations of the Cross' and act as altar servers, readers and offertory takers. Pupils are familiar with the Church's liturgical year and aspects of the 'Year of Mercy.' The school is active in the community with the choir singing at local events and taking part in a festival of performing arts in the 'Bible reading' section. Pupils show consideration and respect for adults and each other. They value the sense of security, friendship and community created within the school

Prayer and worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate readily in class and assemblies. They have a sense of ownership of the school prayer which they wrote with each class contributing a line. Pupils know the traditional prayers of the Church appropriate for their age group and respond well to weekly 'Be Still' meditation times. They are also given opportunities to write their own prayers many of which were seen during the inspection. All classrooms have a prayer table which reflects the Church's year and a 'Come and See' board which includes pupils' work on the current topic.

Chaplaincy is outstanding and a strength of the school. The part-time chaplain leads a team who meet regularly to support the liturgical life of the school and provides support for all members of the school community. She is well known to pupils who are aware of support available at times of need. Teams of young leaders have been in place for two years and lead faith based activities during every lunch break. Each year group participates in a reflection day at the Chellington Centre and Year 6 pupils also have a day at the diocesan shrine. Singing is very good with a strong choir which enhances assemblies and collective worship.

Pupil achievement and progress in religious education is good. Pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education and the wide range of activities involved. Behaviour for learning is very good and pupils work well in pairs and groups. Achievement is good for all groups and pupils know what to do to improve their work through individual targets which they discuss with their teachers. Books are very well presented and show coverage of the curriculum. A recent innovation is a 'Journey of Faith' book which accompanies pupils through their school career and includes pieces of extended writing. Marking is positive and there are comments to help pupils make the next steps in their learning. By the end of Key Stage 2 attainment meets and in some cases exceeds diocesan expectations.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The head teacher together with his deputy who is also subject leader for religious education show outstanding leadership in the way they promote, monitor and evaluate the provision and outcomes for the Catholic life of the school. On their arrival they completely reviewed provision and sought support and advice to ensure the Church's mission in education is explicit to the whole community. Their vision for the school is shared with all staff and new teachers are given every support by the subject leader and the chaplaincy team. Senior leaders plan whole school collective worship, often assisted by pupils. During the inspection

the headteacher led a powerful interpretation of the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' enabling pupils to understand the importance of responding to people's needs. The priority given to establishing the Emmaus Room clearly demonstrated the importance leaders give to prayer and worship. This is also reflected in the school's development plan which gives priority to the promotion of its Catholic life. A 'Door of Mercy' is at the entrance of the Emmaus Room and examples of the Corporal Works of Mercy are illustrated by pupils. As a result of this strong leadership and example, all members of staff clearly promote the Catholic life of the school and are good role models for the pupils. Teachers are encouraged to continue their professional development and enrol on the CCRS course. Religious education is regarded as a core subject and given a high status. Parents are invited to school Masses and celebrations and attendance has greatly increased in recent years.

The subject leader for religious education works relentlessly to raise standards of attainment and teaching as well as supporting new staff. She has put in place a rigorous monitoring and support programme which includes the overseeing of planning, lesson observations, book scrutinies, learning walks and pupil interviews. She plays a key role in moderating sessions with other partnership schools. She also works closely with the chaplain in assisting members of staff as they plan class worship and assemblies. The school's marking policy is applied to religious education and enables pupils to know how to improve their work. Assessment is accurate and in-service training for staff is leading to confidence in levelling pupils' attainment.

The School Committee has only been in place for a few months. However, some members are governors of long standing and are well aware of their responsibilities. Three members were interviewed and were well informed about the life of the school through meetings with the headteacher and subject leader as well as visits to school events. The link member for religious education comes in weekly to support chaplaincy and talk to staff and pupils. Some concern was expressed at the departure of the headteacher and deputy but the appointment of an interim headteacher and new subject leader was welcomed.

The majority of responses to the parent questionnaire were supportive and appreciative of the Catholic ethos of the school and the provision for religious education. There were many positive comments including; 'We are very happy with the school, excellent teaching, caring, compassionate and kind.' Communication with parents is good and includes curriculum information, weekly newsletters and termly meetings where pupils' progress and well-being are discussed.

Provision

Grade 2

Collective worship is central to the life of St Gregory's and a key part of every celebration. Assemblies are well planned and there is a variety of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer. Holy day Masses are celebrated in school or parish throughout the year and on special occasions. These include the annual Diocesan Schools Mass, Feast of St Gregory, First Holy Communion and Leavers' celebrations. Collective worship on Mondays includes Sunday's gospel reading with a reflection on how this links to life and situations today. There are many opportunities throughout the school day for staff and pupils to pray together. The traditional prayers of the Church are known by pupils including the Angelus which is said daily at noon. The traditions of the Church are explored with pupils who have a good knowledge of the sacraments and their links with scripture. The school chaplain supports the Catholic life of the school through her role in nurturing both pupils and staff.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. Lessons observed during the inspection were well planned with clear learning intentions and a range of differentiated activities. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and questions and take the opportunity to extend learning. However, pupils in Key Stage 2 would benefit from access to class sets of bibles to support and extend their knowledge of scripture. Staff training on

assessment is leading to confidence in tracking pupils' progress. Assessment books which accompany pupils through the school are a recent innovation. Good support by teaching assistants is enabling all pupils to make progress. Workbooks are well presented and have the mission statement on the front cover. The book scrutiny undertaken as part of the inspection showed coverage of the curriculum, positive marking and prompts to help pupils improve their work.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. On average, 10% of teaching time is devoted to religious education and the programme 'Come and See' is now embedded. Other faiths are taught well. There are good quality resources which are used to improve teaching and learning. Vibrant religious education displays around the school emphasise the importance of faith to the life of the school. The curriculum enables pupils to develop a sense of service to each other and the wider community. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. The curriculum is enhanced by visits from the diocesan youth ministry team, local parish priests, the diocesan religious education adviser, music specialists and speakers who explore vocations with pupils. There is good reason to expect that good outcomes for pupils are likely to be maintained or improved as the school consolidates and builds on good practice in all areas.

The inspector would like to thank all members of the school community for the warm welcome and hospitality extended during her visit.