

Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection of
Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

St Laurence Catholic Primary School

DFES No: 873/3366

URN: 110845

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mrs Janet Scally

Headteacher: Mrs Jan Southgate

Denominational Inspector:

Mrs M. Betts

Dates of Inspection: 20th March 2014

Date and grade of previous inspection: March 2009. Grade 1

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DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St Laurence Catholic Primary School is an average size school for pupils from 4 to 11 years. It has 257 pupils on roll, 86% of whom are baptised Catholic. The school serves the Catholic communities of North Cambridge and surrounding villages. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and a variety of nationalities. 59% of pupils are from minority ethnicity backgrounds and this number is increasing. Nearly all the teachers and support staff are Catholic. Since the last inspection the school has achieved the RE (religious education) Quality Mark Gold Award.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

Grade: 1

St Laurence School is an outstanding Catholic school. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the school's daily life and very effectively promotes pupils' good behaviour, respect for each other and positive attitudes. Pupils mentioned how what they are learning in school "gives them a sound basis for living their whole lives" and impacts strongly on their decisions and actions. As a result pupils' personal, spiritual and moral development is outstanding. The headteacher is deeply committed to promoting the Catholic ethos of the school and this inspires all in the school community. Relationships within the school are very good and reflect Christian respect and concern for others. Pupils experience a broad and large variety of religious enrichment opportunities.

Pupils said "We are all part of God's family here and try to live as Jesus would expect". Prayer, Mass and worship are of pivotal importance in the school's life. Staff are committed to the very high profile given to religious education. Pupils make good progress throughout their school life in knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Develop RE marking so that pupils are given opportunities to respond to teachers' comments and so improve their work and extend their learning.
- Embed RE assessment procedures to track pupils' progress and analyse the results, so that underachievement can be identified, action taken and standards raised.
- Increase pupils' involvement in planning worship by providing opportunities for groups of pupils to prepare and present short acts of worship to younger children.

PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups.

Grade 1

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They know and understand the school's ethos statement and strive to achieve it in all areas of their school life. Pupils are proud of their school and show concern for the well-being of others. They appreciate the gospel values taught especially mentioning the need to forgive each other, and to respect another person's faith and cultural diversity. Pupils willingly undertake responsibilities and are given many opportunities to act on their own initiative and ideas, for example, in deciding the charities to benefit from the Lenten activity day. Pupils' achievements are recognised and valued. They are actively encouraged to develop their individual skills and talents to their fullest extent as evidenced by the Key Stage 1 pupils preparing for a gymnastics competition. Pupils' ideas are sought and acted upon through the School Council and through regular pupils' surveys seeking their views of the school's Catholic life. Pupils praise the friendly, caring attitude of the teachers and the approachability of all staff and especially the headteacher, who listen to them and help solve any problems.

The school provides a variety of enrichment opportunities which are highly valued by pupils such as being part of the Dig Deeper Lenten project highlighting global hunger which encouraged pupils to create their own vegetable plot.

All pupils respond extremely well to worship and the prayer life of the school. They participate respectfully and with ease and appreciate these experiences as a time of uniting the whole school community. They particularly mentioned the benefits they receive personally from the opportunities given them for reflection and meditation. Pupils create their own prayers and Lenten promises as part of their RE learning. They greatly enjoy worship especially the lively and devotional songs which they sing and sign extremely well. They appreciate listening to and presenting class assemblies which are often based on their current RE topic. Pupils are involved in planning these. A further development would be for small groups to prepare and lead their own short acts of worship. Pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year and enjoy experiencing its celebrations. They contribute to the presentation of Mass. Worship contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Pupils know RE is regarded as important and one described it as "the best time of the day". Through it they develop a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith. They are learning at a good rate throughout their school life and achieve age appropriate RE levels of attainment. Their progress is in line with national expectations. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons immensely especially when given practical tasks such as drama, designing posters and drawing from life the two fish and loaves following the story of the "Feeding of the 5000". They also appreciate collaborative work when sharing their ideas with each other. This happened when pupils were preparing power point presentations of Holy Week events and together added reflections and prayers that could be used at each slide. Pupils' responses showed evidence of their growing depth and maturity of thought. Pupils are keen to learn about other faith traditions. Work is presented well and demonstrates a good range of written tasks.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school?

Grade 1

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors are deeply committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school. They communicate a clear vision for the Catholic ethos which inspires a strong spiritual purpose throughout the school. Through rigorous and regular monitoring activities they all have a good overall view of the school's strengths and this provides a firm basis for areas of future development relating to RE and the school's Catholic life. The school has worked intensely on the development issues from the last diocesan inspection and made strong progress in these areas. Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are very supportive and keep themselves well informed about the work of the school through visits, RE monitoring activities, and being present at school council meetings. Teachers are encouraged and supported to complete the CCRS (Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies) course and to take part in any diocesan training. Staff have the opportunity for a personal retreat once a year. The school supports other Catholic schools by organising primary RE days. The school is a welcoming inclusive community where all members are respected and valued. Very attractive RE displays and good quality artefacts around the school confirm the Catholic identity. The school works in partnership with parents who are extremely positive about the school, and the work and care of their children. The school has strong links with the church through the close involvement

of the parish priest and parishioners. The church financially supports the school for its yearly whole school outing and one of the Sunday Masses regularly uses the school hall. The senior leadership team and the governors are all very actively involved in maintaining and developing the Catholic ethos. They are very aware of the need to sustain the school's excellent Catholic identity in the light of the future retirement of the present headteacher.

The RE subject leader is very well supported by the school leadership. This ensures RE has a high profile. All aspects of religious education teaching and learning are monitored regularly and rigorously and a clear direction for improvement has been set. Pupils are assessed regularly and this work is collected in the pupil's blue assessment book, which will show individual progress over time. The levels given are moderated both within school and through collaboration with the local Catholic partnership. This assessment data is linked to national expectations. It is planned for the levels to be broken into sublevels so that pupil progress can be tracked in more detail. Governors regularly receive reports concerning the new RE curriculum, the monitoring results and pupil achievement data. The RE subject leader leads training and provides firm support and guidance to the staff. The budget provided is in line with that given to other core subjects. Religious education is well resourced. Visitors including clergy are invited to share their expertise.

PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 1

The quality of worship, prayer and the sacramental life of the school is outstanding. They are integral to the school's daily life. Pupils experience a wide range of worship enrichment opportunities such as the older girls recently attending the "Women's World Day of Prayer" service at a Cambridge church. Worship is well planned, linking scripture and song to the theme. Visual presentations, bible and other stories, and drama are effectively used to promote pupils' interest and develop their thinking. A calm reflective atmosphere is created. The children learn a variety of traditional prayers. Classroom altars are attractive and provide a focus for worship. Mass for pupils is celebrated in school and occasionally at the parish church. The priest works in partnership with the school to provide pastoral support for families. He makes a significant contribution to the school's sacramental life. Reconciliation services take place at key times of the liturgical year

The quality of religious education lessons overall is good with many outstanding features observed. Teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge and lessons are planned well, with clear learning intentions. Where teaching was best, visual presentations; open questioning; talking partners; and practical outcomes, were all effectively used to motivate and interest pupils, inspiring them to work with enthusiasm and independence. Differentiated tasks were set that allowed all pupils to achieve. Formal assessments are undertaken regularly. Pupils know the level at which they are working but are not consistently advised as to how they might strive to attain the next level. Work is well marked with praise and affirmative comments given. Questions are often included in the marking to improve the work and extend the learning but opportunities are not yet consistently given for pupils to consider and write their responses.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is very good. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the new *East Anglia Primary RE Curriculum programme* which was devised and piloted by the teachers at this school, along with others, throughout the diocese. It fulfils the requirements of the *Bishops' Curriculum Directory* very well and links the themes with gospel values and Catholic traditions. Scripture is used very well during teaching. Pupils are encouraged to become aware of the demands of religious commitment and this was very explicitly linked to the Church's season of Lent. A variety of creative input and motivating activities inspire maximum learning for pupils. For example, pupils have used art to portray their image of God. The curriculum contributes very

well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Other faiths are studied twice a year and pupils from other faith backgrounds contribute well to the learning. Attractive religious education displays, complementing the imaginative, creative classroom environments, give added value to this core subject.

The inspector wishes to thank the headteacher, staff and children for their very warm welcome and for contributing to her very enjoyable and interesting visit.



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Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection

22nd March 2014

Dear Pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St Laurence Catholic Primary School

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those pupils who spoke to me especially the group from Year 6. I was very interested in your views of your school. I enjoyed being present at your assembly and at most of your Religious Education lessons. Well done to everyone involved.

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

- The strong Catholic ethos of your school that provides many opportunities for prayer and worship.
- You are friendly and considerate to each other and are well cared for by your teachers.
- The school provides very good opportunities for you to develop personally, spiritually and morally.

I have asked your teachers to consider, after marking your RE work, to give you time to improve or extend the work to make it even better. After an RE assessment, your results will in future provide you with information as to how you are doing and what you need to do to reach the next level. I have suggested that the older pupils prepare short acts of worship to present to the younger ones.

Thank you again for your help. I wish you the very best for the future,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Betts
Diocesan Inspector