



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Primary School**

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URN: 123858

Headteacher: Alison Fishlock  
Chair of Governors: Katie Owen

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**Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

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Date of inspection: 11-12<sup>th</sup> October 2017  
Date of previous inspection: September 2013

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

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## **Description of the school**

Our Lady of Mount Carmel is a single form entry Catholic primary school, with 132 pupils on roll, 40% of whom are Catholic. The school serves the parish of SS. Luke and Teresa. The proportion of pupils with English as an Additional language (EAL) is 32%. Pupils with special educational needs make up 9 % of the number on roll. The average level of attainment on entry to the school matches national expectation.

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)**

**Grade 2**

This is a good school because:

- The governing body and all leaders are fully committed to promoting the school's Catholic life and mission as their first priority. The senior leadership led by the inspirational headteacher are determined to ensure the highest quality of Catholic education, with the result that the school has made significant steps towards becoming an outstanding school.
- The school is open and welcoming, a place where pupils, and staff, from all faiths and none are included in every aspect of school life and all pupils show respect and genuine interest and care towards each other,
- The behaviour of pupils and their care for others is outstanding. They are role models for each other and this contributes enormously to the spirituality and ethos of the school. Their behaviour for learning is positive, they enjoy their RE studies and make good progress over time.
- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning is good with some outstanding and some weaker, aspects observed during the inspection.
- Leadership of RE provides good, effective guidance and support to staff, making fruitful use of outside resources, advice, and diocesan training in its drive to develop and improve provision and outcomes for the majority of pupils.
- Pupils are proud of their Catholic school, and willingly embrace the many opportunities to grow in their spiritual lives, internalising and adopting the values promoted, and demonstrating the impact of faith in their daily lives.

### **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is good**

- This is a school that knows itself well through rigorous and reliable procedures for self-evaluation; these enable strengths and weaknesses to be highlighted and action taken to improve practice and outcomes. The school asks parents, staff and pupils, through discussions and questionnaires, their views and suggestions for improvement.

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Consequently, it has a realistic view of what has to be done to improve and grow. The school has already amply demonstrated the capacity to follow through its objectives.

- There is a positive commitment from every member of this young, energetic staff to work together to achieve the best for the pupils, as well as promoting Catholic values across all the subjects. Staff morale is good and they are excellent role models for their charges.
- The areas for development noted in the last inspection have been systematically addressed, and moved the school from requiring improvement to good. Pupils are now increasingly taking ownership of their collective worship, led by the chaplaincy team, and developing the skills of planning and presenting assemblies and liturgies. Better use is made to use assessment data to plan for the learning needs of all pupils and to provide greater challenge. The headteacher has been able to delegate the discrete role of RE coordinator to a member of staff and this has been an excellent transition process. This school has the capacity, through already effective evaluative structures and practice, to continue its journey towards becoming an outstanding school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Maximise the impact of next step marking of pupils' work in order to promote independent learning and to challenge the more able pupils, by improving the quality of both the teachers' formative comments and a fuller, more reflective, response from the pupils.
- Secure teachers' RE subject knowledge so that they are confident and able to lead their pupils to a deeper understanding of the subject.

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## How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?

Grade 2

### a) The extent to which pupils understand, contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

- Pupils understand what it means to be in a Catholic school and how it differs from other schools. They can articulate for instance, the impact that the prayer life of the school has on their view of life and their relationship with others. 'We pray because we are a Catholic school. Prayer affects our whole life. Our Lady's is a reflective school'. The whole school community were involved in reflection on Mission and Values at the start of the year and pupils selected the values they considered to be the most important in their lives.
- Pupils enthusiastically take on a range of responsibilities, which shows they are alert to the needs of others and have a sense of belonging to the school, the parish, and the wider community. For instance, they play an important role in raising money for charities both local and global, such as CAFOD and Mary's Meals. The Year 6 pupils attended a training day at Stourhead to learn leadership skills, which they have already put to good use in looking after the youngest children.
- Their responses to Bishop Declan's questions to the young people of the diocese were very thoughtful and committed, indicating an awareness of the Church's wider mission. Pupil conferencing provides essential feedback, which is built into improvement plans. This includes reviewing the impact of liturgies, and suggesting how they could be improved, but also a whole school focus on Pope Francis' Laudato Si reflecting on the planet but also the care of the school grounds.
- The chaplaincy team takes the lead in promoting the prayer life of the school. They model the pupil led reflections in class and lead the Friday Gospel collective worship.
- The celebrations of Advent and Lent were planned and led by the various classes across the school.
- Pupils have a genuine respect for those from different backgrounds. This is due to a growing understanding of different faiths and cultures which they have studied and reflected on in RE. There is a real sense of belonging here shared by all regardless of faith or none, which feeds into their understanding of British values and culture. The vibrant Catholic life contributes enormously to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and both pupils, and their parents, express how the school's faith and values have influenced their outlook and choices.

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## **b) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

- Most pupils enter the school at levels of attainment and understanding of religious knowledge and practice, which are in line with expectation. They make good progress from the start so that by the end of Key Stage 1 they are meeting expectations. At the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils reach Level 4, meeting their targets, with some exceeding expectation. Other groups such as those with EAL, SEN and disadvantaged students, make similar good progress because of very effective planned interventions, such as religious vocabulary aids, and the pro-active support of learning assistants.
- Discussions with pupils and responses in their written work show clearly that as they move up the school, important literacy skills have been secured, especially the EAL pupils, and they become more confident in using religious language in a meaningful way. They not only learn about religion but also learn from religion. This is a real strength of their learning because it makes them aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- Pupils benefit from learning with their peers, such as the paired conversations. This could be broadened to include bigger group discussions so that they can critically reflect and respond to their faith and that of others, and so deepen their understanding. Their ability to learn independently is a developing competence, and teachers need to constantly challenge their pupils to actively seek to improve their knowledge. Pupils need opportunities and challenge to discuss more deeply in lessons, to research topics, and then to write more reflectively and at length in their books.
- Pupils enjoy learning new things and ideas and feel confident enough to express their own opinions. Their outstanding conduct in lessons and around the school reflects the school's successful strategies to promote the highest standards of behaviour.

## **c) How well pupils lead, respond to and participate in the Prayer Life of the School**

- Every pupil irrespective of faith background participates fully, and feels included, in the prayer life of the school. They show reverence, attentiveness and willingness to play their part, singing with great enthusiasm. They are becoming more actively involved in the planning and preparation of their liturgies and class assemblies.
- They value the many prayer opportunities during the school day, be it at the beginning of every lesson or the end of the day. The pupil conferencing at the start of the year revealed the remarkable extent of the pupils' feelings and reaction to their prayer life. On reflection time one pupil echoed others when she said, 'Reflection gives us ideas and freedom to explore the hidden

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message in the Gospel'. Another commented, 'Prayer gives us the opportunity to speak to God without having to speak out loud'.

- They compose their own heartfelt prayers and reflections, in different forms – for instance modelled on the Psalms. The Class Reflection Books are beautifully presented collections of their prayers and reflections, as well as a record of their journey in spirituality. Work on the Holy Spirit and Mission was particularly well done. The Poppy Book of Remembrance was an intimate and personal response to their family members' involvement in the World Wars.
- The chaplaincy has been actively involved in planning the liturgical year, such as the Nativity, Holy Week, and the Crowning of Mary procession in the school grounds. They have reviewed the impact of their presentations in order to make them better, with suggestions such as more PowerPoint for the little ones, or different children in each class having the opportunity to act in the Gospel dramas. The new chaplaincy team are keen and still finding their feet with helpful guidance from staff and governors.
- The sacramental and liturgical life of the school is reflected in the assemblies, Masses, and the celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year of the life of Jesus. This helps to develop their sacramental understanding and the added support from the parish priest and deacon Paul is inspiring.

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## How effective are leaders and governors in developing the Catholic Life of the school?

Grade 2

**a) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils**

- Leaders and governors effectively promote, nurture and sustain the Catholic ethos of the school as their primary concern and care and it is the main thrust of its strategic planning. The transforming influence of the inspiring headteacher, in particular, has resulted in rapid improvement since the last inspection.
- The governing body, making good use of diocesan training, is becoming a challenging, knowledgeable and practical influence in the life of the school. They meet all the statutory, canonical, and diocesan requirements fully. Rigorous processes of self-evaluation ensure that judgements are accurate and reliable. This is achieved mainly by constant monitoring, such as the Ethos and Learning walks, making use of the helpful Governors' Toolkit to ask salient questions, to challenge, and to support. Questionnaires ask parents, staff and pupils their opinions as to what could be better. As a result of their feedback, the school governance and leadership can more accurately assess the impact of its actions, and can quickly re shape its improvement planning where necessary.
- That structures and processes are successfully embedded in order to sustain the uninterrupted pace of progress over time, is proven by the continuing high standards fostered by the acting headteacher and the RE coordinator. Work continues in planning for future improvements based securely on good quality monitoring and evaluation.
- Staff prayers and Inset days on spirituality and RE are included in every year's timetable. This is binding the staff together in commitment and unity of purpose, sharing the same goals and values of the school's mission. All new staff attend the 'New to Catholic Education' programme as a priority.

**b) How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the curriculum for Religious Education and relationship education, and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils**

- Leaders and governors use data and monitoring information intelligently and effectively, exercising careful oversight of the curriculum and learning outcomes. They receive regular reports from the RE leader and take part in learning walks around the school. Where necessary they challenge and hold staff to account, as

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is evident in a scrutiny of the minutes of governor's meetings and the staff performance management targets.

- The governing body has a wealth of knowledge and practical expertise in the provision and outcomes of the RE curriculum, which is a tremendous support to staff, and to the new RE coordinator in particular. Deacon Paul has produced an excellent pre-topic information and theological background folder, which supports and helps teachers to teach for meaning, in units such as 'Sacrament' or 'Revelation'.
- Subject development plans are drawn up and added to or amended during the course of each term, with measurable objectives to be achieved over a stated time. Progress in addressing these is closely monitored, and as a result, they are very effective instruments for change and progress.
- The provision for staff induction and in-service training is particularly supportive for the teaching of RE. This is resulting in teachers becoming, for instance, more confident in assessment, marking, and in setting learning objectives, although there is still work to be done in these areas in order to improve pupil outcomes further.

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## How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?

Grade 2

### a) The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- Teaching is effective in promoting purposeful learning, the engagement of the pupils, and their overall good results. The pupils' excellent attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their progress and achievement. Learning assistants are involved in planning lessons with the teacher, so that interventions have a positive effect.
- Teaching is generally good with some outstanding practice observed during the inspection, but also some weaker practice. Where teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation of work and intellectual effort, the pupils rise to the challenge and are able to contribute their own arguments and opinions.
- The sometimes less secure subject knowledge of teachers results in missed opportunities to stretch students even further, or failing to pick up on their misunderstandings. Consequently, they have the inevitable difficulty in leading their pupils to an understanding deeper than their own. There is, however, steady improvement thanks to the aforementioned support from leaders and governors, and the teachers' own generous openness to advice and their willingness to be the best for their pupils.
- The assessment and marking policies are becoming embedded, and the levelling of pupils' work more consistent, thanks to the shared moderation with the other schools in the Dunstan partnership, and the banking of levelled work as a guide and measure of accuracy. The progress targets in the front of pupils' class books gives them an idea of where they are, although not always how to get to the next step.
- The marking of pupils' work is sometimes inconsistent and not sufficiently challenging in order to drive progress and improvement over time. Where the comments are both helpful and demand some intellectual effort from the pupils, the teacher should expect a similar quality of response in terms of effort and reflective writing from the pupils.

### b) The extent to which the Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The RE curriculum meets all Bishops Conferences requirements. It is broad and balanced so that pupils can explore and develop their own values and beliefs. They explore themes such as prejudice, fairness, compassion and injustice, which they then link to the objects of their charity fundraising, and outreach to others

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in society who are more needy, such as the Dementia Support charity or Mary's Meals.

- The study of other world faiths is a strength of this inclusive school because it promotes knowledge, understanding, and respect for other beliefs, rather than ignorance and suspicion. It also inculcates an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures. Visits to other places of worship are arranged, such as the local Baptist church.
- The annual Faith Week sees pupils studying a faith such as Islam in some considerable depth, and then sharing their knowledge with the other classes. There is a substantial body of excellent work in their World Faith books. For instance, the Silver Birch class researched the Pillars of Islam, and covered both the differences and similarities between the abrahamic faiths.
- The curriculum design promotes continuity and progression and leads to overall good teaching and learning. Teachers review the RE topic at the end of the term to highlight what went well, or otherwise, in order to improve learning for the future.
- The curriculum promotes spiritual, moral and vocational development and is taught through the lens of the Faith. Provision for sex and relationship education is in place and approved by the governors adhering to diocesan guidelines.

### **c) The quality of the Prayer life provided by the School**

- The prayer life of the school is fully inclusive and joyful. Prayer punctuates the school day and is part of every celebration. The school offers many opportunities for the pupils to develop spiritually, and there is progression through the different traditional prayers and the Mass, as the children go through the school. There are opportunities for retreats and pilgrimage (Glastonbury) and the recitation of the Rosary.
- The parish priest makes an important and valued contribution to the spiritual life of the school and reflects its role in the wider mission of the parish and the universal Church. The church stands across from the school and is used regularly for Mass and as a faith learning resource. Pupils serve and read at the Sunday Masses.
- Both teachers and pupils have created colourful and thought provoking displays around the school which remind the whole community of the liturgical cycle, the topics the pupils are currently studying and are supportive of the school's vibrant Catholic life. The school values are prominently displayed and a striking poster - How to be a Person of Faith is prominent in the school hall.
- Parents and carers are invited to attend Mass, assemblies, and events such as the Crowning of Mary and the Harvest Festival and come in significant numbers. There are strong links between parents, school and parish.

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## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

The 40 returned questionnaires scrutinised were very positive about the school and appreciative of the quality of their children's education. Some typical responses included:

*'The head teacher and deputy head go above and beyond to make a difference, not only to our child's life, but to our life as parents as well!'*

*'The school has a lovely sense of community and nurtures its students and encourages them to do their best.'*

*'It is small and very friendly. They're having lots of understanding for children coming from abroad.'*

*'Diversity of inclusion. Everyone is made to feel welcome.'*

*'What is distinctive is the value of having prayer in school, and the fact that each child is treated individually.'*

*'All the children are polite and caring. I feel able to approach any teacher, especially the head. Children are made to feel important and valued.'*

*'A very nurturing school with high values, and inclusive to every child's needs.'*

*'The great relationship they have with the church.'*

*'It was amazing to see how well behaved and smart the children are at the Harvest Festival service an all other church services.'*

*'This school helps my child understand about God, and also it helps her develop spiritually and morally.'*