



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **The Rosary Catholic Primary School**

Beeches Green Stroud Gloucestershire GL5 4AB

Telephone: 01453 762774

E-mail address: admin@rosary.gloucs.sch.uk

URN Number: 137410

Head teacher: Mrs Rosy Savory

Chair of Governors: Mrs Lizzie Dawkins

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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: 2-3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017

Date of previous inspection: February 2012

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector: Mrs Celia Dolan

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## Description of the school

The Rosary School is a single form entry Catholic primary school with 186 pupils on roll, 55% of whom are Catholic. It converted to become an academy on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012. The school serves two Catholic parishes, The Immaculate Conception Stroud, and St. Joseph's, Stonehouse. With the withdrawal of free transport from the latter parish, the number of pupils has dwindled in recent years. There is a growing number of disadvantaged and pupil premium children (23%), pupils with special educational needs (23%) and those who have English as an additional language (21%). The average level of prior 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:

- It is an open and welcoming school where pupils and their families, from all faiths and none, are warmly invited and integrated. The school leaders and governors have the promotion and nurturing of the school's Catholic life and mission as their first care and priority, and are employing effective processes to monitor and plan for improvement, making fruitful use of outside resources, advice, and diocesan training.
- The pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. They demonstrate care and respect for each other, and their positive attitude to learning results in good progress.
- The quality of teaching across the school is good, resulting in good learning and achievement over time. Where there are weaker areas of inconsistent practice, the school is taking well planned and effective action to improve the impact of teaching strategies on better learning.

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

- The school has successfully identified its strengths and weaknesses and has drawn up plans to improve practice and outcomes. However, urgency is needed to drive through these plans to fruition - by raising the level of challenge and accountability, and promoting and supporting the separate role of RE coordinator, as well as some discrete guidance for the emerging chaplaincy group.
- The governing body, while it has always been supportive and caring, is making itself more keenly knowledgeable, and understanding of the importance of rigorous processes of questioning and monitoring the real day- to-day affairs of the school. They have already attended the local diocesan training, and are making a real impact with the more frequent monitoring visits by the Admissions and Ethos committee.
- The areas for development noted in the last inspection have been largely addressed, leading to improvement, with better training for governors, improved marking and assessment strategies which are more closely related to RE objectives in lessons, and more appropriate tasks and targets to meet the learning needs of all the pupils. There is still work to be done in these areas to bring all practice consistently up to the best.

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

- Raise the quality of teachers' formative marking - so that it demands real intellectual effort from the pupils, resulting in more challenging independent learning, and reflective, extended writing.
- To distribute leadership roles more effectively, especially that of the RE subject leader, but also providing an adult with responsibility for guiding and encouraging the blossoming chaplaincy team in their first steps.
- To develop class teachers' confidence in handing over more ownership of collective worship to the pupils - so that they can initiate, organise and present liturgies themselves, and so become more actively involved in the Catholic life of the school.

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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

- The chaplaincy team, (currently made up of pupils in Y4-Y6), are beginning to take the lead in promoting the prayer life of the school, and are developing the skills of planning and organising their own liturgies. For instance, they are already taking responsibility for the prayer tables in class and are involved in planning the weekly whole school Gospel assembly with the head teacher.
- These pupils are excellent role models especially for the younger children. Their attitude is summed up in responses such as: 'We are all in God's Family. How can I make a difference?' or 'One girl in my class has a different religion, so just knowing Christianity, we want to know her faith and make her feel included. I have learned respect for their religions'. The school needs to move quickly to capitalise on this good will and idealism by creating more opportunities for the children to contribute more fully to the Catholic life of the school.
- The pupils can articulate the impact that the prayer life of the school has on their view of life and their relationship with others, understanding the links between faith and action, reflected also in British values. Their own composed prayers are relevant and heartfelt. They accept and flourish in an atmosphere of faith and spirituality.
- Pupils have not recently been involved in a formal review of the school's Mission Statement: 'We do our best following in the footsteps of Jesus' although it is very much part of their lives and alluded to frequently both in assemblies and in lessons. They would benefit from being partners in a re-appraisal of the school's mission and have the opportunity to explore what it means to follow in Jesus' footsteps. The Pupil Conferencing feedback questionnaires, for example, clearly indicate that some children are not familiar with the metaphor of 'following in someone's footsteps'.
- Older pupils increasingly take on a range of responsibilities, which shows that they are alert to the needs of others. For instance, they play an important role in raising money for charities both locally and globally, such as CAFOD and The Door, in the spirit of the corporate works of mercy, such as feeding the hungry.
- Pupils have a genuine respect for those from different backgrounds. This is due to a growing understanding of different faiths, which they have studied and reflected on in RE. There is a real sense of belonging and respect for others, regardless of faith or none, and this is an outstanding aspect of this warm, inclusive school.
- The links with the adjacent parish church of the Immaculate Conception are strong. Pupils are involved in parish liturgies and the sacramental preparation programme is led from the parish.

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

- Pupils come from a variety of faith backgrounds and practice. Most enter the school with levels of knowledge and understanding in line with expectation. They make good progress from the start, especially in Early Years where the children have an excellent introduction to RE through story, prayer and reflection, so that by the end of Key Stage 1 they are achieving well. The Year 2 books exemplify this in the variety of opportunities provided for the children in their written work. This work demonstrates their ability to link different biblical references, such as Peter's denial of Jesus in the garden, and Jesus' threefold question to Peter in the Post- Resurrection account of the breakfast on the shore.
- At the end of Key Stage 2 the vast majority of pupils are meeting their targets. Their written work indicates good progress over time, in particular their grasp of meaning and relevance, and learning from religion. Of particular note is the high quality of Year 6 written work from last year's cohort, with exemplary use of dialogue marking producing thoughtful, questioning, and extended responses. However, this excellent practice is not yet consistent across the school, and is an area for development that the school has identified.
- Other groups such as those with SEN and disadvantaged students make similar good progress because of effectively planned interventions 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, they become more confident in using religious language in a meaningful way. Their ability to learn independently, and with others, especially paired discussion, is also improving. However, the rate of progress is dependent in large measure on the quality of teachers' expectation and the level of challenge in setting learning objectives which match the abilities and potential of every pupil.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements and demonstrate a positive interest in learning new things and ideas, and are confident in expressing their own opinions. When asked, pupils were positive about RE lessons, and are ready to be involved and challenged especially through art, drama, and more imaginative responses. Pupils are able to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and particularly to draw the relevance to their own lives, and their personal response to what they believe. Their outstanding conduct in lessons and around the school mirrors the key values which the school community constantly promotes and lives.

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

- All pupils irrespective of faith background participate fully, and feel included, in the prayer life of the school. They show reverence, attentiveness, and willingness to play their part. They are ready and eager to be more involved in the initiation , organising, and presentation of their liturgies and assemblies, not just being willing participants in adult led collective worship. They already have the examples and role modelling of the chaplaincy team, with their valued input into the Monday Gospel assembly. They are articulate, role models but need to be given the freedom to fly. Teachers themselves

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need to become more confident in letting them take the initiative, so they, the pupils, will become more confident in taking more ownership of the prayer life of the school.

- The pupils value the many prayer opportunities during the school day. They compose their own heartfelt prayers and reflections, displayed on the prayer tables. The sacramental and liturgical life of the school is reflected in the assemblies, the class and whole school Masses, and the celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year of the life of Jesus, and the saints.
- The pupils have helped to lead two 'Hours of Prayer' on separate occasions this year already. There are plans to introduce the Leaders in Faith challenge, which will involve every single pupil in contributing to the Catholic and prayer life of the school, as well as meditation sessions for pupils in Key Stage 2. Both of these initiatives could fruitfully be set in train now, especially the latter brought forward from the planned introduction date of September 2017.

## **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 Admissions and Ethos committee has taken on the responsibility of closer monitoring and support of the Catholic life of the school.
- The governing body is becoming a more challenging, knowledgeable and practical influence in the life of the school. They meet all the statutory, canonical, and diocesan requirements fully. They are acquainted with and have reflected on the People of Hope document, how it can influence the school and this has been successfully carried through. They have held a recent Governance review and subsequently taken up the helpful training provided by the diocese, and are planning to make maximum use of the support of the other schools in the local hub, such as shared Inset days.
- More robust and reliable processes of self evaluation are ensuring that judgements are becoming more accurate. There is frequent detailed monitoring by the Admissions and Ethos committee members who, together with the head teacher, report to the full governing body. The school also asks parents, staff and pupils, through discussions and questionnaires, their views and suggestions for improvement, and consequently it has a realistic view of what has to be done to improve and grow. Accountability is rapidly taking the place of assumptions about the quality of provision and outcomes.
- The chaplaincy team would benefit from some adult guidance and support in their early steps to becoming real animators in the life of the school with a suitable person taking on this preferably discrete role.

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- Staff spirituality is well supported with staff taking time to pray together regularly. Links with the parish are strong and the parish priest is a supportive and welcome presence in the school. There is at least one Inset day annually devoted specifically to Catholic life and spirituality. Leaders are open to advice from outside agencies, including the diocese, and share a renewed determination to move the school forward.

**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 which help them to exercise careful oversight of the curriculum and learning outcomes. They receive termly RE reports through the head teacher, but recognise that the role of RE coordinator must become discrete, especially in relation to the day- to- day organising and monitoring of the subject.
- Learning walks around the school, lesson observations, and book scrutinies have successfully identified the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning, and this results in supportive provision for staff induction and in service training. As a result, teachers are becoming more confident in assessment and in setting learning objectives, although there is still work to be done in these areas in order to improve pupil outcomes further.
- Where necessary governors challenge and hold staff to account. This is evident in a scrutiny of the minutes of governor’s meetings, where there are examples of specific questions, and answers expected, regarding the quality and impact of the RE provision.
- A subject development plan has been drawn up but it is not clear that it is used as an annotated working document, which is added to or otherwise amended during the course of each term. Also, the planned actions for further improvements could be refined from general aims to more specific measurable objectives, with evidence of impact and success in meeting the targets set.

**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 good across the school leading to good achievement with some examples of outstanding written work from the older pupils. It is effective in promoting purposeful learning, the engagement of the pupils, their enjoyment, and their overall good results. The pupils’ excellent attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their progress and achievement. Learning assistants, who are a real strength of the school, are closely involved in planning lessons with the teacher, so that interventions have a really positive effect. Drama and hot seating are used to very good effect especially with the younger children.

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- Although not consistent across all years, teachers are encouraging more independent learning through challenging tasks, which better meet the pupil's individual abilities. The school is also aware of the constant need to encourage pupils to write more reflectively and at length. There are many examples of outstanding work by last year's Year 6 pupils which could fruitfully be used as exemplars of best practice so that present pupils could see what is possible and emulate them.
  - The school has identified weaker areas where there is insufficient challenge in terms of questioning or lower expectations of pupils' written work and presentation. 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. Pupils are able to relate what they are learning to their own lives. Learning from religion is a strength of the school.
  - Where teaching is less effective, opportunities are sometimes missed to challenge the pupils to write more creatively and reflectively on what they are learning, rather than simply re telling stories or explanations.
  - There are now more effective systems for the tracking and monitoring of pupil progress over time. The assessment and marking policies are becoming embedded, but the school's own scrutiny of pupils' written work reveals some discrepancy, on occasion, between the over generous levels given by an individual teacher, and the quality of the actual work in their books. Teachers will benefit from the support of shared moderation with the other schools in the Catholic hub.
  - The marking of pupils' work is often helpful in showing them how to improve, but not consistent in all classes. The impact on progress over time would be enhanced enormously by more challenging teacher comments, such as the newly adopted 'Prove It' challenge at the end of a piece of writing which elicits a more extended, thoughtful response from the pupils and requires real intellectual effort. The school has impressive examples of outstanding dialogue marking making a real difference to progress, examples which could fruitfully be shared across the school with both teachers and their pupils, and in the course of time, with other schools in the hub.

#### **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 students can explore and develop their own values and beliefs. They explore themes such as fairness, compassion and injustice, which they then link to the objects of their charity fundraising, and outreach to others in society who are more needy.
- The study of other world faiths is given great importance in this inclusive school because it promotes tolerance, understanding, and respect for others, especially cultural and religious differences. Provision for sex and relationship education is in place and approved by the governors adhering to diocesan guidelines.
- The curriculum design promotes continuity and progress, and leads to good teaching and learning. It promotes spiritual, moral and vocational development and is taught through the lens of the Faith.
- The sacramental preparation programme for First Holy Communion is run in the parish. Pupils have joined other schools for retreat days and the older ones are involved in preparing for the Leavers' Mass at the end of the school year.

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### **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. There is now a focus on encouraging more pupils to organise and lead collective worship, starting with the chaplaincy team.
- Pupils experience the regular Masses and the celebration of the feasts in the Church's calendar, as well as the special seasons of Advent, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. There are also opportunities to learn the traditional Catholic devotions such as the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross.
- There are 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. There is room to make them more attractive, and stand out, both in classes and around the school.
- Parents and carers attend Mass and assemblies when they can, especially the Friday award assembly, which is a significant opportunity for the school to reinforce its values and be seen to reward what is really important in the life of the school community. There is a flourishing and very committed and active PTA which involves parents in the life of the school and is rightly much valued for its outstanding contribution.

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## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

All 14 returned parental questionnaires were every positive about the school and the quality of their children's education. Some typical responses included:

*'The school is fully inclusive. My children are learning that we are all equal and valued...a faith school equips them for life in how to treat others with respect and kindness. There is also a strong team spirit that carries through from Reception to Year 6'.*

*'Although we are not a religious family we believe that the moral teachings of a Catholic school are very important. It is inclusive...everyone is made to feel welcome'.*

*'We are proud as a family to be part of a community that is inclusive, and has taken Pope Francis' teachings on welcoming strangers, immigrants, and refugees. Understanding everyone is vital to build the Church'.*

*'We are a Hindu family and although the religions are different many of the principles and morals are similar. I wanted my child to learn that faith is part of daily life and the importance of this...not just as an "add-on" '.*

*'The Rosary school provides an excellent Catholic education. I am pleased with how much (my daughter) is learning about her faith'.*