



25th May 2013

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

Mrs Mary Simmons
St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School
McKean Road
Oldbury
Birmingham
B69 4BA

Dear Mrs Simmons

Section 48 Monitoring inspection: 23rd May 2013

Thank you for the welcome you, your staff and pupils gave to me when I inspected your school on 23rd May 2013 and for the information you provided both before and during the inspection. I am grateful for the time given by all, including the chair of governors, in speaking with me.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last section 5 inspection to be an outstanding school and because it is now five years or more since you last received a section 48 inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning for Catholic life and religious education. In order to make this judgement I read school documents, including a summative self-evaluation, interviewed senior leaders, two governors, the subject leader for RE, and the Parish Priest who had recently retired and pupils, observed two lessons, carried out a learning walk of all lessons, attended Mass for Year 5 and 6 pupils and looked at a sample of pupils' written work. In addition, I gathered evidence of some of the outstanding practice in the school as part of a diocesan wide survey of good practice in Catholic life and religious education.

Catholic Life

Catholic Life of St Francis Xavier School is rooted in the school's leadership team's deep commitment to the faith, which is supported by all members of staff who are wholeheartedly dedicated in their support of the school and parish. The school rightly judges its Catholic life to be outstanding. This judgement is reliably based on effective monitoring and evaluation. Leaders conduct rigorous and systematic monitoring relating to the provision and outcomes of Catholic life which is both scheduled and unscheduled and undertaken by a variety of people including governors. Systems are in place to enable pupils, parents, staff and governors to share their views. The recent Catholic life survey completed during parents' evening shows that the vast majority of parents are pleased with the high quality provision, and noted that the Catholic ethos is very obvious in all of the school's work. A number of suggestions for improvement were made by parents and the school has responded appropriately to these. Monitoring of pupil voice through a school council led survey on prayer indicated that the children wanted the opportunity for more leadership roles, such as leading the praying of the rosary for other children. They are now planning and leading prayer services for their parents, where parents participate in reflections and prayer. As a result of the consultation with pupils the school is now awarding excellence in RE badges and certificates. The children are proud to be part of a Catholic community and can explain how Jesus "holds us in the palm of his hands," like a caring person. There is close contact with the parish community which includes a community of sisters who live next door to the Church. Faith in action was demonstrated by the majority of pupils who wrote prayers for a terminally ill sister and then created a prayer tree for her in their prayer garden and led a memorial service for her. Parents agree whole heartedly that there are many opportunities for both children and themselves to be involved in the Catholic life of the school.

All staff have an RE based target as part of performance management and they all know they are responsible for the promotion of the faith. Leaders spend a significant amount of staff meeting time affirming and reaffirming the uniquely Catholic ethos of the school. Music is used effectively in acts of



collective worship to enhance the prayerful experiences for children in school and also in parish Masses which the children attend. Collective worship and classroom environment is monitored by the subject leader and even when the focus is on other curriculum areas, the quality of the prayer focus is still noted. An informative observation sheet for monitoring collective worship has been devised and it offers useful support to staff. The governing body are a supportive and challenging influence within the school community. They know that theirs is an outstanding school but they continually focus on sustaining Catholic life and RE through being fully informed on a regular basis. Governors undertook a learning walk on the prominence of the Catholic life of the school and noted that the displays in the main entrance and around school did enhance and strongly promote this. There has been an excellent working relationship between the headteacher, chair of governors, and the recently retired parish priest who were all responsible in ensuring that St Francis Xavier became an outstanding school and continues to remain one. The school provides an outstanding Catholic life which is greatly appreciated and beneficial to all.

Religious Education

Self-evaluation of RE at St Francis Xavier Catholic School presents an accurate picture of the school. Rigorous and systematic monitoring and evaluation accurately judges progress and attainment to be outstanding and the school's self-evaluation lists many priorities for improvement which are cross referenced to the school's RE action plan. Senior leaders including the RE subject leader monitor planning, lesson observations and book trawls. In monitoring planning, the subject leader pays attention to reflection on meaning as this is an area that the school has identified for development. Lesson observation findings are fed back to all staff reinforcing the high expectations that are held by senior leaders. The school is rightly proud of the quality of their RE lessons; nothing but good or better is acceptable. The subject leader has modelled lessons for staff new to the school and has had the opportunity of team teaching which has resulted in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Children were enthusiastic and engaged in their learning. Planning and teaching is of a high standard across the school and this impacts significantly on the pupils' spiritual and moral development. There is excellent input from teaching and support staff and a variety of creative teaching styles used. This was very evident from the learning walk. The feast of Pentecost was being celebrated in a number of ways; including dance, drama and music. In one class the children celebrated Pentecost with a beautiful prayer service in which children pretended to be the Apostles. They wrote messages on doves, thanking the Lord for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Colourful displays around the school emphasise the school's strong Catholic identity as does the informative web-site. Rigorous assessment is in place. Staff are using the diocesan assessment focus sheets taking a different strand to focus on each year. Evidence is analysed by the RE leader in conjunction with the deputy headteacher who is responsible for assessment. Progress of different groups of learners is being monitored and action taken to address any areas of concern. This has entailed working alongside staff and setting targets to maximise progress. Staff and governors meet regularly and there is a planned monitoring programme in place, subsequently governors are kept well informed and up-dated on a regular basis.

An outstanding aspect of the school is the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school. The children have formed a Fairtrade Team to promote awareness of Fairtrade throughout the school by organising assemblies and events like the Fairtrade Big Breakfast. Each year the school's Fairtrade Team purchases fair trade items from a women's fair trade organisation in Dahod and sells the items in school and the parish. The profit made is donated to a very deprived school in Dahod in India that the school has strong links with. These outstanding aspects have been used as exemplars for the purpose of a survey identifying best practice in the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Through the dedication and commitment of the headteacher and her staff who are focused on living out and sharing their faith, St Francis Xavier will maintain its outstanding practices.

Yours sincerely

Sister Susan Collins
Diocesan Inspector