

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

St Martha's Catholic Primary School

DfE No: 926 3395

URN: 121139

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mrs Lorraine Driscoll

Headteacher: Mr Aidan McGovern

Denominational Inspector:

Mrs Marion Betts

Date of Inspection: 30th June 2016

Date and grade of previous inspection: July 2011. Grade 2

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St Martha Catholic School is a primary school for pupils 4 to 11 years. It is in the process of expanding to receive 2 classes for each year group. Building work is taking place to provide a larger hall and more classrooms. There are at present 245 pupils on roll, 78% of whom are Catholic. 58% of teachers are Catholic. The school serves the deanery of St Wilfrid with some pupils travelling some distance to attend. The majority of the school's population is from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is below the national average.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

Grade: 1

St Martha's School is an outstanding Catholic school. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the school's daily life. The committed and enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher, deputy and religious education leader is instrumental in powerfully fostering pupils' growing awareness of the Catholic faith and their understanding of how to live this out in their lives. As a result pupils' personal, spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding and this is reflected in pupils' excellent behaviour, care for each other, and positive attitudes to their learning. The very high quality of pupils' art and music skills contribute to their spiritual awareness. Pupils are proud of their school describing it as "a loving school which respects all people". Prayer, worship and sacramental celebration are of pivotal importance in the school's life. The Catholic ethos is tangible around school with many vibrant and attractive Catholic and religious education displays. Staff are committed to the high profile given to religious education. The Religious Education (RE) leader ensures that a dynamic RE curriculum is delivered through a creative, enquiry approach. This motivates pupils to learn ensuring they make good progress in RE throughout their school life.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Embed throughout the school the practice of reflection opportunities for pupils to have time, encouragement and support, at a level appropriate to their ability, to think more deeply on how they can improve or extend their RE learning.
- Promote a culture within the school where pupils know and understand the improvement needed for them to be able to achieve a higher RE attainment.
- Increase pupils' involvement in planning worship by providing opportunities for groups of pupils to prepare and present short acts of worship within their class setting.

PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups. Grade 1

The extent to which pupils benefit from the school's Catholic life is outstanding. They know and understand the school's values and strive to achieve them in all areas of their school life. Pupils show understanding of the diversity of others within the school community and say respect and inclusion of all people is of paramount importance within the school. They appreciate their views and opinions being listened to and valued and describe themselves as growing in confidence in their ability to ask difficult questions and debate theological issues together. Through the Catholic teaching that pervades the school ethos pupils develop an understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation and say they can use prayer at these times to help them do what God would want. Pupils display a readiness to celebrate and enjoy the wide range of experiences that the school offers them. They show concern for the well-being

of others as demonstrated by the responsibilities they undertake and their keenness to raise funds for needy causes. Pupils' achievements are recognised, valued and celebrated together with the whole school community. Pupils praise the friendly, caring attitude of the teachers and teaching assistants who listen to them, help solve any problems, encourage their learning and make lessons fun.

All pupils respond extremely well to worship, and the prayer life of the school. They listen attentively, and participate respectfully and with ease. Pupils know and understand traditional prayers. They are confident to describe occasions when they prayed to help them through difficulties. Pupils have a good understanding of the Church year. They enjoy experiencing its celebrations and appreciate the meditative opportunities of other liturgies. The school choir's high quality of the singing of parts of the Mass enhances the atmosphere and reverence of the service. Worship contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Class Mass and assemblies based on pupils' RE learning are organised by teachers with contributions from the pupils. They particularly mentioned their involvement when they pray the rosary together, that children from all year groups lead each of the various prayers. Involving older pupils to prepare and present their own acts of worship in small groups to their class, could promote further opportunities for them to be more fully involved in the planning of worship.

Pupils know RE is an important subject and through it develop a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith as well as promoting their growing depth and confidence of thought in their opinions. Pupils are keen to do well, apply themselves diligently and are interested and enthusiastic in their learning. A high number of pupils achieve age appropriate RE levels of attainment. However pupils at present are not always told what they could do to achieve a higher standard. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons especially valuing the opportunities given for them to ask questions, research for answers and discuss together their views and opinions. They also appreciate the creativeness they are allowed when given opportunities to demonstrate their learning in a variety of self-chosen outcomes. For example, following the celebration of Pentecost, pupils designed and painted their own Ethiopian style of icon to represent this theme. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they are sometimes given for reflection following their work and the challenges, appropriate to their ability, given to develop or extend their learning.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school? Grade 1

The leadership of the school's Catholic life is outstanding. The headteacher and deputy are deeply committed to promoting and constantly developing the Catholic life of the school. A clear powerful vision is effectively demonstrated by the richness of pupils' Catholic life experiences; the strong spiritual purpose throughout the school; and by the supportive encouragement given to pupils to respond and commit to Catholic values. The school is a welcoming inclusive community where all members are respected and highly valued. Staff and pupils' well-being is of high priority to the school leadership. Staff implement a culture of positivity and praise linked to "looking for greatness" displayed by pupils. As a result pupils strive to be the best they can be and praise the greatness in each other. Governors are very supportive. They regularly review and are involved in the work of the school. Pupils contribute to school decisions. An example of this is that their ideas relating to a memorial to a former pupil, are being actioned. The three development issues from the previous inspection have been rigorously implemented. Many charities, both local and global, are supported by the staff, parents and pupils, who also raise funds to support the orphanage visited by staff in India. The school has very strong links with the parish through the close involvement and regular input of the parish priests, who makes valuable contributions towards the pupils' spiritual journey. The school has also strong links with the wider

community. Very attractive RE displays and good quality artefacts around the school confirm the Catholic identity.

Religious education is extremely well supported by the RE leader. She is enthusiastic and committed, keeps herself well informed of ongoing developments and guides and supports teachers in their planning and delivery. She regularly leads staff training. She has pursued a clear direction of further developing this subject with excellent strategies for improvement. She introduced an enquiry led curriculum which pupils have responded to with enthusiasm and increased motivation to learn. This culture of pupils asking questions has benefitted all areas of Catholic life with the headteacher, priests and other visitors involved in attempting to answer them. The RE leader has promoted a more systematic assessment procedure and by collecting this data on the school's assessment computer programme, each pupils' RE progress can be clearly tracked and monitored. The RE governor is committed to her role and regularly discusses and monitors an overview of the subject with the leadership. The RE budget is generous and in line with that given to other core subjects.

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

Worship, Mass and prayer are central in the school's life. Pupils' liturgical formation is extremely well planned to ensure the widest possible experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition of prayer and worship. A calm reflective atmosphere is created daily for worship. Attractive prayer tables are used well as a focus for prayer. The parish priests make significant contributions to the sacramental life of the school. Pupils from year 2 upwards regularly attend and contribute to parish Mass in the church. A Reconciliation service take place each year. In the worship observed, there was very effectively used visual presentation, drama, and song to convey the gospel message and develop pupils' thinking and responses. Worship themes are often linked to the gospel reading. Visits greatly enhance pupils' worship experience such as year 3 and year 6's visits to Walsingham and the school leavers' Mass at the town's Red Mount chapel.

The quality of religious education lessons overall is good. Lessons are planned with clear learning objectives and topics are based on one big question which arouses pupils' curiosity and motivates their learning. When pupils are given appropriate praise and constructive feedback on their work with opportunities for reflection on these comments, this is very effective in enabling pupils to extend or develop their learning and attain a higher outcome. This has also led to deeper and more thoughtful responses from pupils. However this practice is not yet consistently used in RE in all classes.

The school's religious education curriculum meets all requirements of the Bishop's Conference. At least 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the diocesan scheme using additional resources to enhance certain areas of learning. Other faiths are studied. The school plans to limit these to two main faiths so that these two can be studied in more depth each year. Tasks often have cross curriculum links with other subjects for example Art, Craft Drama, ICT, and Literacy. Visits and visitors including the parish priests are used as extra resources for RE learning. Pupils are strongly encouraged to become aware of the demands of religious commitment and hence the curriculum contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Attractive religious education displays give added value to this core subject.

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



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Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection

1st July 2016

Dear Pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St Martha's Catholic Primary School

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those pupils at Mass, in assembly and at chanting club who sang so beautifully; to all in Year 2 who astounded me by knowing all the words of the Gloria; and to those from Year 5 who came to speak to me and answer my questions. I was very interested in your views of your school. I enjoyed being present at Year 6, Year 3 and Year 4 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 a wide range of prayer and worship activities.
- 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 spiritually, morally and socially.

I have asked your teachers to all consider using DIRT (dedicated improvement reflective time) as part of RE teaching so that you have opportunities to extend and improve your learning. I have also asked that after you have done an RE assessment, your results will provide you with information as to how well you are doing and what you need to do to reach an even higher standard. I have also asked teachers to consider giving the older children opportunities to plan and lead in small groups their class worship sessions.

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

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Betts
Diocesan Inspector