

Archdiocese of Cardiff



Inspection Report

St Gabriel's RC Primary School

Inspection dates	26th - 28th September 2011
Reporting Inspector	Mr Michael Flynn
Accompanying Inspector	Mrs Margaret White
Type of school	Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	130
Local Authority	Newport
Chair of Governors	Mrs Christina Maynard
School Address	Ringland Circle Ringland Newport NP19 9PQ
Tel. no.	01633 273937
Fax no.	01633 273937
E-mail address	stgabriels.primary@newport.gov.uk
Parish served	St Gabriel's
Date of previous inspection	2005
Headteacher	Miss Claire Russell (Acting)

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

Proportion	Description
With very few exceptions	Nearly all
90% or more	Most
70% or more	Many
60% or more	A majority
Close to 50%	Half/around half
Below 40%	A minority
Below 20%	Few
Less than 10%	Very few

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Archdiocesan website: www.rcadc.org

Context

Saint Gabriel's Roman Catholic Primary School is situated in Ringland, a large local authority housing estate on the eastern fringe of Newport. The school's catchment area is the Parish of St Gabriel's, which comprises a mix of private and local authority housing. The majority of pupils are from the Ringland and Alway estates, which are designated Community First areas.

The school caters for pupils aged 4 to 11 years. At the time of inspection, there were 130 pupils on roll. This was made up of 46 Catholic pupils, comprising 35% of the school population and 79 pupils of other Christian denominations, 1 of other faiths and 4 with no faith, comprising 65% of the schools population.

Pupils represent the full ability range. 21% of the pupils are identified as having additional learning needs. There are no pupils with statements of special educational needs. There are 4 pupils from ethnically defined groups and 2 pupils for whom English is not their first language. No pupils come from Welsh speaking homes. Currently 15% of the children are eligible to receive free school meals.

There have been a number of staffing changes since the last inspection. The present head teacher was appointed as acting headteacher in April 2011 until the end of the 2011-12 academic year. The previous headteacher was seconded to St. Gabriel's as acting headteacher in 2007 and was appointed as headteacher in 2008. During this period she was seconded to another Catholic primary school within the locality initially for 80% of the time, which was moved to 100% during the course of the secondment. The current deputy headteacher, who was appointed as acting deputy headteacher in April 2011 until the end of the 2011-12 academic year, also took responsibility for religious education. In addition there are 3 new teachers and 2 new teaching assistants.

The school has 4 full time teachers and 2 part time teachers; 5 are Catholic and 3 hold the CCRS. There is 1 HTLA who is a Catholic and 6 other teaching assistants, 3 of whom are Catholic.

There have also been many changes to the governing body with only one foundation governor remaining from the last inspection. The religious education link governor has a wealth of experience in this area and has been in post since the summer term 2011.

Summary

How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?	Good
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St. Gabriel's is a good school because:

- despite standards being adequate overall, the majority of pupils make progress particularly by the end of key stage 2;
- the majority of teaching is good;
- prayer and worship underpin pupils' spiritual and moral development;
- effective pastoral care promotes pupils' wellbeing;
- positive relationships exist in the school community;
- effective partnerships with external agencies enhance the school's provision;
- partnerships with parents are good and they are welcomed to the school;
- governors and school leaders have a clear vision for curriculum religious education and the Catholic life of the school.

What are the school's prospects for improvement?	Adequate
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The school has experienced a period of transition with a temporary acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher and several new members of the governing body. The acting headteacher has worked effectively with governors, senior leaders and staff to bring about some necessary improvements, though these are at an early stage of development.

The school's prospects have strengths that outweigh areas for development because:

- outcomes for pupils are generally adequate and improvements to outcomes are at an early stage of development;
- recent developments in the monitoring, evaluation and review of religious education are good; however, progress since the last inspection is limited and self-evaluation is not yet embedded in the life of the school;
- the governing body has been through a period of change with several new members recently appointed and although governors have a clear vision for the strategic development of the school, progress since the last inspection is at an early stage of development.

Recommendations and Required Actions

What does the school need to do to improve further?

R1: Ensure consistency in the implementation of policy and practice in curriculum religious education in relation to expectations and outcomes for all pupils.

R2: Embed the recently developed elements of good practice in monitoring, evaluation and review in religious education.

R3: Further develop and embed the Archdiocesan initiatives that foster and encourage pupils' leadership of prayer and worship in English and Welsh.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Archdiocese.

Main Findings

KQ1. How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Relative to their starting point, most pupils demonstrate progress in their learning and achieve adequate standards, particularly by the end of key stage 2. Most pupils, in most classes, engage well in a variety of activities, apply themselves diligently, work at a good pace and are keen to do well. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, recently established pupil tracking sheets and class religious education folders confirm that progress is made. Many pupils are improving their religious literacy, demonstrating knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate to their background, age and ability. They can relate their learning to their own lives. In their oral and written responses, many pupils are starting to use language that reflects the themes and expectations of the *Here I Am* programme. They also demonstrate the ability to empathise with the key people in, and the events of, Christmas and Holy Week and parables such as The Good Samaritan and The Prodigal Son. *Here I Am* assessments, linked to NBRIA Levels of Attainment, indicate that pupils are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at an adequate rate. The majority of pupils have a sound knowledge of the key celebrations of the liturgical calendar by the time they reach the end of key stage 2.

Pupils are developing an understanding of Catholic teaching and the teachings of other faiths in the *Here I Am* programme. They make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit from it. Pupils have a sense of belonging to the school community of St. Gabriel's and are proud of their school. They can explain how its mission statement impacts on daily life and guides their standards of behaviour. Pupils show care and respect for all members of the school community and are courteous and helpful to visitors. They are happy to take on responsibilities and are proud of their achievements. The recently formed 'Meaningful Work Programme' provides good evidence of this. Their care and concern for others is evident in their fundraising for charities. Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities that support their all-round development. They are developing their responsiveness to the use of the Welsh language. Pupils' wellbeing is well supported by effective pastoral care systems.

Pupils' response to prayer and worship in a variety of settings is good. In the whole school assembly, pupils demonstrated an ability and confidence to be involved in an act of collective worship. They listened attentively, were reflective and sang tunefully. In the classroom-based acts of collective worship, pupils' behaviour was good. They acted in a respectful, reverent and reflective manner. The prayer life of the school is developing and making a growing contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

KQ2. How good is provision?	Good
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The majority of teaching is good. Thorough lesson planning and teachers' knowledge of their pupils helps them to make progress. Teachers employ a range of teaching styles and plan a variety of activities that enable their pupils to work independently and collectively. Generally, positive pupil teacher relationships, a range of questioning styles and effective use of ICT encourage good levels of pupil motivation and concentration. Teachers' clear expectations help to create a climate where most pupils strive to achieve their best. Learning support assistants, where appropriate, are deployed effectively to support literacy and behaviour within religious education. Pupils are provided with informative feedback, both orally and through the marking of their work.

Assessment and academic guidance in religious education is developing. As a result of these developing assessment procedures and newly established pupil tracking system, the school is starting to be able to present an accurate view of each pupil's current performance and progress over time. Assessment for Learning strategies, including elements of pupil self-assessment and the increasing use of success criteria, ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The "I can" statements and target sheets have started to be used in planning and are in the process of being used directly with the pupils. Through cluster and in-house moderation exercises, teachers are developing accuracy in applying NBRIA Levels of Attainment. Pupils' achievements are regularly recognised and success is celebrated.

The religious education curriculum, and the wider life of the school, meets the needs of the pupils enabling them generally to achieve at an adequate level, and in some cases, achievement is good. All Bishops' Conference and Archdiocesan requirements are met. Opportunities for pupils to learn from religion, reflect on meaning and relate faith to daily life are developing. Good provision for pupils in need of specialised learning support ensures that they have every opportunity to succeed. The work of the school with individual pupils to create "time out" opportunities, when needed, is greatly valued by these children and their peers. Teachers consistently use the Welsh language in incidental situations throughout the school day; however, the use of Welsh in worship is an area to be developed. The study of Welsh saints and eisteddfod activities help pupils to appreciate the Welsh dimension of Catholic life and culture. The extracurricular activities are varied and much enjoyed. The internal accommodation is well maintained, and, with a growing range of resources, reflecting clear expenditure plans in this academic year for religious education, a stimulating learning environment is developing. The School Council and Eco Committee have a clear focus upon improving the school environment and have had an impact upon recycling and peer support and buddy systems. Involvement in events such as Black History Month and the Inclusive, Diversity and Equalities Award (IDEA) Level 1, are indications of the school's effective provision for recognising diversity and promoting an understanding of global citizenship and sustainable development.

Prayer and worship are important to the life of the school. Acts of collective worship, in a growing variety of settings, provide regular opportunities for pupils and adults to pray together. Themes are consistent with the Catholic character of

the school, celebrate the liturgical life of the Church, reflect *Here I Am* topics and are relevant to the lives of the pupils. Teachers take responsibility for leading prayer and worship and involve pupils in its planning and delivery. The school recognises the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to become better skilled and equipped to plan, prepare and lead their own acts of collective worship. All classrooms have displays that reflect the current *Here I Am* topic, 'Homes and Families'. Evidence of interactive prayer foci, which highlight the liturgical season or promote values and attitudes, invite pupils to reflect on life situations and can be seen in general displays and class religious education folders. Parents/carers are invited to attend key celebrations and class-lead acts of worship.

KQ3. How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Governors discharge their statutory and canonical responsibilities and several of the new governors have joined the longer-established governors as frequent visitors to the school. The governing body has been through a period of change and is keen to support the school and its position within the local community. Governors are supportive of school leaders, enjoy constructive relationships with staff and appreciate their achievements. They are aware of the developments and system building that is going on in the school against the backdrop of change and uncertainty that has punctuated several periods since the last inspection. Governors are committed to reflecting the distinctive Catholic character of the school in its decision-making and policies. The recently appointed religious education link governor is eager to develop his role.

Governors seek the views of parents/carers. There has been a clear change, in the last year, in the allocation of financial resources to secure the supply of resources to effectively enhance the Catholic life of the school and religious education teaching.

Leaders and managers demonstrate a clear commitment to the mission of the Church by providing a broad, balanced and varied curriculum that underpins pupils' academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The acting headteacher has made a significant contribution to the development of many areas of school life since her appointment. She has set about her task with determination, diligence and drive. She has offered a clear lead and encouragement to staff at all levels within the school. She sets an example and is a positive role model. Staff's understanding of, and commitment to, the Catholic life of the school is enriched by recent participation in a range of Archdiocesan courses and in-house training. Developing monitoring strategies, together with Archdiocesan initiatives, result in planning priorities for improvement that are targeted at improved provision and outcomes for pupils. The enthusiastic acting deputy headteacher/religious education co-ordinator is committed to bringing about improvement. Suitably detailed action plans address areas to be developed. The religious education self-evaluation report provides an accurate view of the school's strengths and indicates areas for consolidation and development. However, a more rigorous and systematic approach to monitoring, evaluation and review processes is required.

The school has developed a variety of effective partnerships, which impact positively on pupils' achievements. The school offers high quality care and guidance for the wellbeing of all pupils and is particularly responsive to pupils who have additional needs relating to behaviour issues. Good links exist with the receiving High School and transition is well managed. There is a desire from leaders and managers to develop meaningful and positive links with the parish. There is a strong sense of belonging in the school and all are welcomed in a spirit of equality. Leaders and managers demonstrate a positive work ethic to make a difference. Relationships in the school community are good. There is effective provision for pupils to develop an understanding of their role in society. Pupils are well informed about sustainability and global citizenship. The School Council and Eco Committee are developing well. All teachers and teaching assistants are valued for their commitment to the ethos of the school. Prayer and worship are making a developing contribution to preserving the spirit of community within the school. The school has forged good relationships and enjoys a good reputation within the local community. The school recognises the primary role of parents as well as the fact that many of the children do not come from Catholic families. The leaders and managers have worked hard to invite all parents to participate in and support their children's learning.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

53 parent questionnaires were returned. Nearly all parents are happy with the values and attitudes that the school promotes and agree that the school gives a clear understanding of what is taught in religious education. Nearly all parents state that they are made to feel welcome in the school and that their concerns and suggestions are considered. They also feel that they are kept well informed about their children's progress in religious education and are happy with the help and guidance available. Nearly all parents believe that the school gives them a clear understanding of what is taught in personal and social education and, where appropriate, in sex and relationships education. Nearly all parents also agree that the school enables their children to develop spiritually through prayer and worship. It is clear that whilst some parents have selected the school because of its reputation as a good school and that it feeds directly into a successful high school, significantly, a number of parents clearly state that they have chosen the school because it is a Catholic school and they are keen for the links between the school and the wider parish to develop further in the future. Some of the parents have identified the fact of being a relatively small school with small classes as a positive feature. This is summed up in one parent's observation that, "All the teachers know all the children". Parents generally make positive comments about the care and guidance that is available at the school.

Appendix 2

Evidence Base

- Pre-inspection team consultation
- The school's self-evaluation reports and other relevant documentation
- Meetings with the headteacher and religious education co-ordinator
- Meetings with representatives of the governing body
- Discussions with the religious education link governor and parish priest
- A meeting with parents
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of prayer foci and displays
- Attendance at whole school, phase and class-based acts of worship
- Discussions with the School Council and Eco committee
- Discussions with pupils
- Discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff
- Parent questionnaire returns
- Observation of daily routines