

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST MARY MAGDALENE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL Ardwell Lane, Greenleys, Milton Keynes MK12 6AY

DCSF No: 826/3379.

URN: 110483

Head Teacher: Mrs R Jones
Chair of Governors: Mr C Forken

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Everington
Associate Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

Date of Inspection: 28 November 2013
Date Report Issued: 10 December 2013

Date of previous Inspection: 21st October 2008

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and in partnership with
Milton Keynes Local Authority

Information about the school

St. Mary Magdalene is an over-subscribed primary school with 325 children aged 4-11 and a nursery provision which children attend on a part-time basis. The school is situated in the parish of St. Mary Magdalene but also serves the parishes of St. Francis de Sales and St. Edward the Confessor. 65% of the pupils are Catholic and 35% are from Christian backgrounds. St. Mary Magdalene draws from a broad, very mixed socio-economic catchment. 61% of the children are from an ethnic minority background and 51% of the children speak English as an additional language.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic School

Grade 1

St Mary Magdalene is an outstanding Catholic school because of the leadership provided by the head teacher and the deputy head who is also the religious education [RE] subject leader and the commitment and hard work of the whole staff. Religious education is at the heart of the curriculum and the Catholic ethos is in the fabric of school life. The mission statement is known and understood. Teaching is outstanding with effective support from skilled teaching assistants. Achievements and standards are outstanding. Children achieve consistently and make outstanding progress throughout their time at the school. Assessment provides clear guidance and informs the well planned curriculum which meets the interests and needs of the learners, enabling them to make meaningful connections between life and faith. The children are very proud of their school and feel valued. The school environment is clean, well cared for, bright and uncluttered. The chaplaincy provision is strong. The links between staff and governors are strong. The governors provide effective challenge. The behaviour of the children is exemplary.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

St Mary Magdalene is an outstanding school that has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. There were no areas of development required by the previous Section 48 inspection. The subject knowledge of the staff is strong because of the shared good practice and excellent support from the exemplary Religious Education coordinator who is ably supported by the head-teacher. Religious Education as a subject is monitored and evaluated with rigour. Planning and book scrutinies, learning walks, assessment, pupil tracking and data evaluation are regular features of monitoring. Feedback is shared with staff and governors. RE self-evaluation is regularly up-dated.

The Religious Education curriculum is well resourced. The new diocesan approved scheme, 'Come and See' has been enthusiastically adopted, using high quality resources and effective staff training from the head-teacher and deputy head-teacher. Teaching assistants are well directed and involved in all aspects of the work. The school council and the eco council meet regularly and make valued suggestions for school improvement. The RE governor is actively involved. Parents are consulted regularly and responded very positively to the Section 48 questionnaire.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no major areas for development. The school has identified the need to fully implement the new marking policy to the R. E. Curriculum. This is currently taking place.

Outcomes for pupils**Grade 1**

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Children play an active part in the life of the school and participate in a range of religious activities. They enjoy experiencing the traditions of the school which they see as landmark events of the school's religious year. Pupils talk eagerly about the miming of the Easter story. They know about their class saints. They talk easily about the scripture stories they know, giving examples of parables and miracles. They like having responsibilities such as 'perfect prefects' and play leaders. They enjoy their lessons because "they learnt lots, the lessons were not boring because the teachers made them different and fun." The children have high aspirations for their future careers.

The focus of the prayer tables is clear with high quality artefacts and books displayed. The children talked with enthusiasm about the school and class prayer books, prayer groups, the prayer garden and retreat days. They have an excellent knowledge of the prayers of the church and prayer forms an important part of the daily life of the school. Parents and grandparents commented on the children's excellent behaviour during assemblies. Inspectors saw excellent examples of class prayer using pertinent and relevant music and pictures. Year 6 planned and prepared advent liturgies to lead for the younger children. Chaplaincy provision is very strong. The chaplaincy team has a well planned programme which ensures a strong impact on the whole school community. The parish priest, who is the school chaplain, is a regular and welcome visitor to the school.

The children were absolutely clear that there is no bullying in their school. The teachers are approachable and if they had any issues, "they [the teachers] would make it better." They were keen to describe what the mission statement of "Growing together in Faith and Love" meant in practice both in and beyond the school community. Pupils are aware of the needs of others and take pride in raising funds for charity. The school sponsors two children in Kampala Children's Centre as well as responding to natural disasters and annual appeals. The school has an excellent before and after school provision as well as providing a good selection of after school clubs.

Pupil progress in learning is outstanding. They can articulate their knowledge and understanding clearly. Good planning shows evidence that teachers are building on prior attainment and experience. The teachers are ably supported by effective and efficient teaching assistants. The children are active, not passive learners. Behaviour in lessons is excellent, with all engaged and on task. In assemblies and during prayer time they are attentive and reverent. Assessment tracker books enable the staff to have a clear understanding of the children's progress and as a result standards of attainment are high.

Leaders and Managers**Grade 1**

The leadership and management of the head teacher is outstanding. The deputy head is also outstanding. They share a deep commitment to Catholic education and have clear vision for the school and a determination that standards will remain high and continue to improve. They are outstanding role models who support and challenge the whole school community. Their work is supported by a committed and effective senior leadership team. The governing body is actively involved in the school, offering appropriate challenge and support. The governors feel welcomed, valued and appreciated as they fulfil their role of offering constructive challenge as the critical friend to the strong leadership team. The governors access the training provided by the diocese and so are able to be fully involved in

major decisions. Staff spirituality is supported through retreats and reflections. One parent commented: 'the teachers know what they teach and they have a passion for bringing the best out of the children.'

Self-evaluation of the religious life of the school and the RE curriculum is very accurate and good evidence substantiates the judgements made. Self-evaluation is regularly up-dated and the dedicated leadership that directs and guides the school has a clear vision for future development while remaining alert and open to new challenges. One parent said, "the head and deputy are religious people and that this is reflected in the school and is why it is such a good school."

Provision

Grade 1

Provision for the school's prayer life, collective worship and chaplaincy is outstanding. Chaplaincy is accessible to all including parents. There is an awareness of the needs of the parents as well as the children and where it is appropriate, support is given. The flow of the liturgical year is reflected in the life of the school with the traditions and customs of the church year explained so there is an understanding of the concepts involved. Each class has a well planned prayer focus. The children are accustomed to different forms of prayer, formal and congregational, informal and reflective. Displays in classrooms and in shared areas are vibrant and engaging. The standard of displays is high.

The quality of the teaching and learning in RE is outstanding across the school. This bears testimony to the outstanding leadership and support given by the RE coordinator. 50% of the teaching staff and 100% of the teaching support staff are catholic. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain concepts and vocabulary succinctly and with clarity. Lessons have a good pace and a clear structure. Children respond well to a range of teaching strategies, with open-ended questioning, the use of talk partners and carefully differentiated activities that engage and involve pupils in their learning. The religious education exercise books are very well presented. There is a good coverage of topics with a range of learning tasks and differentiated ways of recording outcomes. At all times the children's behaviour is excellent.

Teachers have high expectations. At least 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education. On entry 60% of the children are below the national average in achievement. By the end of Key Stage 2 many children not only exceed expectations but achieve high standards. Analysis of RE data, collected through assessment and evaluation, show that there are no differences in achievement in gender, between socio-economic groups or those with English as an additional language. Parents believe that it is the excellent foundation the children receive at St. Mary Magdalene that enables them to achieve well in their subsequent secondary schools education.

The inspectors would like to express their thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.