

# Catholic Diocese of Northampton



## INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

### OUR LADY OF PEACE CATHOLIC PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Derwent Drive, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 6HW

DfE School No: 871/3353

URN: 110035

Headteacher: Mrs Jean O'Keeffe

Chair of Governors: Mrs Anne Bishop

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Margaret Shinkwin

Associate Inspector: Mrs Philomena Beniston

**Date of Inspection: 12 July 2019**

Date of Report Issue: 24 July 2019

Last Inspection: Primary and Nursery schools amalgamated  
2016

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

## **Information about the school**

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Primary and Nursery school is situated within a housing estate in Burnham, Buckinghamshire, and forms part of the St Peter's Partnership which links all Slough Catholic schools. There are 630 children on roll aged 3-11 with 60 in the nursery. Just over 42% of children have English as an additional language and 64% are Catholic, a declining percentage, who attend the church of Our Lady of Peace. 24 teachers teach RE of whom 14 are Catholic. At present the headteacher is the RE leader though a new appointment has been made for September. The amalgamation of Our Lady of Peace Junior and Infant school, initiated in 2016, has been very successfully achieved, the present headteacher having been appointed from the leadership of the infant and nursery school.

## **Key grades for inspection**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 1**

Our Lady of Peace is an outstanding Catholic school. The headteacher, strongly supported by her dedicated team of senior leaders and governors, communicates her vision of God's love embracing every member of the community and instils in her pupils the habit of prayer and care for each other. The school has been on an academic and spiritual journey since its amalgamation in 2016 and much has been accomplished in the intervening years. The senior leadership team have worked tirelessly to achieve the now seamless transition and the school as it is today is a tribute to their efforts. Children are at ease in their environment which gives them the confidence to learn and take risks without fear of ridicule. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of their faith and contribute enthusiastically in lessons and collective worship. New staff are inducted so that they feel valued and the chaplaincy team ensure that they are welcomed into the community. The excellent pastoral care is much appreciated by parents who have written that "the caring ethos produces caring children, polite and thoughtful. We see children of fourteen and fifteen years old and you can easily identify the Our Lady of Peace pupils".

## **The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 1**

The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. It has not received a full diocesan inspection since the amalgamation but an Interim Monitoring Visit in 2017 identified areas for progress in the monitoring of teaching and learning, to develop the school environment to further enhance the Catholic life of the school and to continue to implement strategies to bring the two schools together.

All have been addressed, the last being very successfully completed. The environment has been considerably improved and there are plans to develop the grounds and buildings still further. Tracking and monitoring are now well-established features of assessment both by senior leaders and governors. They are aware of the deficiencies and have plans in place to rectify them.

The headteacher has a clear vision of how the Catholic life and collective worship, excellent though they are, can be further enhanced for the greater benefit of the pupils. Increased participation, perhaps at younger ages, will be encouraged in collective worship. There is

also a plan to train a chaplain within school and consider a member of senior leadership team to start the 'National School of Formation' programme. Other initiatives are envisaged to extend and deepen the spiritual understanding of the pupils.

School leaders have an outstanding capacity to maintain effectiveness and have the energy and passion to put in place their ambitious plans. This dedicated team, ably supported and challenged by the governors, have the knowledge and experience to identify their targets and how to achieve them.

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

- Continue to take steps to close the gap between all disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, including SEN and non-SEN pupils.
- Expand further the opportunities to work in partnership with other schools so that teachers may observe and learn best practice for the benefit of the pupils in their own schools.
- Promote greater creativity in the teaching of religious education through the study of other areas of the curriculum

### **Catholic Life**

### **Grade 1**

The contribution and participation of the pupils in the Catholic life of the school are excellent. Every child has a fluent knowledge of the mission statement which they helped to compose when the junior and infant schools integrated in 2016. They can proudly recite "With Christ in our hearts, together we grow" as a response to intercessions at Mass and at their Gospel Assembly, and they recognise its significance not only in prayers and religious lessons but in their interaction with each other in all areas of life, in school and outside. Displays and posters in classrooms, assembly hall and passages are constant reminders of the message. All classrooms have a beautifully presented prayer table with liturgically appropriate coloured cloths. Faith ambassadors change these as one of their duties which include leading the Gospel Assembly and offering holy water at the hall doors. Each class has the name of a saint whose life the pupils study at the beginning of the year. The behaviour of the children as they enter and leave assembly and liturgical services is exemplary as they appreciate, in the words of a Year 3 girl, that "this is a time we give to Jesus who loves us". Children visit the outside prayer areas and Stations of the Cross in the school grounds; they enjoy raising money for various charities including CAFOD, Macmillan and Daisy's Dream and St Alban's, their partnership school in Africa.

The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The values of the school are manifest across every aspect of learning and spiritual development throughout the community. Pastoral care is highly regarded by parents who speak warmly of the strong and loving relationships between the staff and the children and between the children themselves across the age range. They comment on the welcome they always experience and the open invitation to school events including values assemblies and Masses. The Faith ambassadors offer hospitality after these services. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress in RE and of the forthcoming topics in PSHE and SRE. Meetings are held in advance of lessons where issues can be discussed with staff and other parents. The school council is enthusiastic in promoting protection of the environment as God's creation and in representing the concerns of their classmates. Members of staff are supported on their spiritual journey by the weekly prayer meetings led by the headteacher. The chaplaincy

team, which an increasing number of teachers have joined, cares for the emotional and mental well-being of both staff and pupils through such initiatives as the prayer and nurture groups, where all who are in need feel heard and healed. Fr Andy, the RE Link governor and a regular visitor to Our Lady of Peace, gives advice and direction to the chaplaincy team which is growing in influence and effectiveness. Each member has a specific role which is performed with love. Other schools in the area have learned from the team.

Leaders and governors are outstanding in their promotion, monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school. There has been a significant change of governors, as there has been of staff, since the amalgamation in 2016 and the present chair has been in post one year. She takes her responsibilities extremely seriously and is attending relevant courses to extend her knowledge. She and the other governors attend school events regularly, particularly the Masses, assemblies, the crowning of Mary and the Celebration of Light on 31<sup>st</sup> October. The senior leadership team, the staff and the governors all contribute to the SEF-RE, the RE development plan and policies. The budget allocated to RE by the senior leaders and approved by the governors reflects the importance they attach to the subject and resources are regularly reviewed. Professional development opportunities are made available to all staff and training is at least termly both by the diocese and within school. Governors keep abreast of progress through learning walks, lesson observations, conversations with staff and reading the responses to parent and pupil questionnaires.

## **Religious Education**

## **Grade 1**

The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education is very good in the majority of lessons. Pupils engage in the topic and answer questions enthusiastically and thoughtfully. They work well in pairs and groups, sharing ideas, listening to each other respectfully, deepening their knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well-planned; teachers' questions are focused and they stimulate pupils to make perceptive comments and to challenge themselves. Tasks are differentiated so that children feel excited and energised by their progress. They relish responding to activities which extend their thinking within the discipline of time restrictions. Learning was evident in every observed lesson. Pupils' books indicate the care they take over their work; presentation is very good and reflects the high expectations of staff and of the children. Questionnaires monitor pupils' enjoyment and feeling of achievement in RE. The most recent was overwhelmingly positive in its responses.

All teaching is at least good and much is outstanding. Links are made to previous lessons so that learning is consolidated and extended. A variety of resources including video clips, photographs and music ensures that the interest of the pupils is sustained and that learning is reinforced. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge which is strengthened by attendance at training courses on Come and See modules delivered both by NORES (Northampton Diocesan Office) and by the RE lead within school. They plan together so that across year groups and key stages consistent progress is made and monitored and children monitor their own progress by referring to the programme at the front of their books and ticking the level of attainment. Religious vocabulary is modelled and is repeatedly used so that meaning becomes embedded. Year 3 children are able to refer spontaneously in conversation to parables they know and to show the relevance in their own lives. Tracking and book moderation, in collaboration with the diocese, are regular and measures are in place to improve further the assessment process. The school is aware of the gap in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils and is driving forward strategies to close this.

School leaders and governors are strong in their commitment to the Catholic mission of the school and ensure that the requirements of the Bishops' Conference are met in every respect at every key stage. At least 10% of curriculum time is dedicated to the teaching of RE and the diocesan guidelines are fully embraced as to content since the recommended Come and See programme is followed throughout the school. Learning is enriched by visiting speakers who bring a new perspective to the topic being discussed. Funding is at least on a par with other core subjects and this year has exceeded both English and Maths. The governor sub-committee for curriculum analyses the provision in RE, makes recommendations and refers these to the full governing board for approval. Leaders and governors collaborate on the writing of the self-evaluation form and on the departmental development plan and policies. Results of parent and pupil questionnaires are scrutinised to indicate areas for improvement and governors visit the school frequently to attend functions and to observe lessons so that they can assess and support. Once provision and outcomes have been evaluated, actions are reviewed by the governors, leaders and middle leaders and challenging conversations take place to ensure accountability. Data tracking is conscientiously studied to inform planning, remedial measures and aspiration. Professional development is regarded as essential and all staff are encouraged to attend courses but also to observe the teaching of other staff, within Our Lady of Peace and elsewhere, particularly of those from whom most can be learned.

## **Collective Worship**

## **Grade 1**

Pupils' response to and participation in collective worship at Our Lady of Peace are outstanding. In assembly, they take a great pride in reading, in making enthusiastic responses and in singing out in full volume. Their behaviour is excellent on entering, on leaving and in their concentration throughout. The children and staff enter with hands joined in prayer, expressing reverence and recognition that this assembly is an act of worship. Reference is made to the theme of the assembly in prayers and lessons through the day so that the message is embedded. Key Stage 1 children acted a simple but effective scenario on the theme "Who is my neighbour?" based on the parable of the Good Samaritan. In Key Stage 2, the same Gospel reading, this time by the faith ambassadors, was made vivid by a compelling video which Year 3 pupils were able to remember in detail at the end of the afternoon. The role of faith ambassador is very highly regarded and is restricted to Year 6. Year 5 children apply by letter for the responsibility explaining its significance for them and proposing what they could offer to the school. Other forms of collective worship are equally impressive. Parents particularly appreciate the Values assemblies to which they are invited, when the children share the poems and prayers they have composed on the theme of the value of the month. Fr Andy is extremely popular and his frequent presence in the school is welcomed by staff, parents and pupils, Masses are a joy for the children who serve, say the intercessions and take up the gifts at the Offertory. There are moments of interaction at the Gospel during which questions are asked and answered with great enthusiasm. Singing is always wholehearted.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is impressive. Time is given, amidst the energy and busyness, for quiet reflection for pupils and staff. Children are involved in acting, reading, offertory processions, singing and dance in addition to quiet attention and heartfelt responses. Prayer permeates the life and fabric of the school; children of all faiths are encouraged to respond in their own way and are at ease when praying and worshipping within the community. Faith ambassadors hold lunchtime prayer meetings for pupils with the chaplaincy team while staff are invited to pray each Friday with the headteacher. Feast days

and holy days are celebrated and the prayer garden and outside prayer rooms are used both during lessons and playtime. Statues of Mary, at the entrance to the school and in the assembly hall, are beautiful reminders for the community of their Catholic heritage as are the Stations of the Cross, set in the school grounds. Prayer Bags are taken home so that the habit of prayer extends to the family, which parents welcome and praise.

Leaders and governors are outstanding in their promotion, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship. Assemblies and Masses are planned in detail by the headteacher who has the responsibility of RE leader until the end of the academic year pending a new appointment. Faith ambassadors meet with her before the Monday Gospel Assembly to discuss and rehearse the content. Fr Andy organises Masses which governors attend. All liturgies are reviewed so that improvements may be made and the opinions of children and parents are sought. RE is an agenda item on every governor meeting; discussions and decisions are recorded in the minutes. Chaplaincy involving senior leaders hold weekly prayer meetings for staff and pupils at which much healing takes place. The headteacher leads a school in which the love of God is realised in the care and warmth which blesses all relationships and encourages excellence in all aspects of school life.

The inspectors would like to express their gratitude to the headteacher, to all staff, pupils, parents and governors who, even at this most challenging stage in the academic year, welcomed us and prepared for our coming most diligently. We very much appreciated the prompt sending of documentation and its efficient presentation.