

St Rose's Catholic Infant School

Green End Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HPI 1QW

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 12 November 2021



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- Pupils in St. Rose's Catholic Infant School are provided with a good and varied curriculum based on the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*.
- Attainment is as good as other core subjects.
- Pupils have a positive and enthusiastic attitude to learning and this impacts well on the progress they make.
- Overall, the typicality of teaching is never less than consistently good.
- The leadership of the subject ensures that teaching is monitored and staff have high expectations. Good systems of staff support are in place.
- The contribution to Catholic life of the school is strong and there is very clear evidence that this permeates all aspects of learning.
- The link governor for religious education is actively involved in the support of RE and together with the parish priest, contributes positively to the subject's growth.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Opportunities for pupils to demonstrate independence in their learning are not always in evidence.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education could be deepened further using scripture and higher order questioning.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- It is evident to all that religious education is at the heart of this school through the well-planned curriculum and the quality of liturgical display throughout.
- Worship and prayer are central to the life of St. Rose's Catholic Infant School and pupils experience a spiritual growth that is meaningful and based on the richness of Catholic tradition.
- Pupils are actively engaged in their work to support those in need and have a clear understanding of the theological principles underpinning this work.
- The school has very strong links with the local parishes and parents are wholly supportive of the way this school expresses its Catholic identity.
- St. Rose's Catholic Infant School is a vibrant school where pupils flourish as they engage in all aspects of their religious education.
- The school's self-evaluation is highly accurate, senior leaders are rigorous in their monitoring and analysis and they are keenly aware of the next steps to ensure continued excellence.
- There are excellent systems in place to support staff to deliver high quality RE lessons and actively participate in and contribute to the Catholic life.
- The leadership is fully committed to ensuring that Jesus Christ is at the core of the curriculum thereby ensuring pupils leave with a clear vision of discipleship for life.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Challenge in terms of pace, differentiation and focus were the key improvement points from the last inspection. Inspectors observed that systems are in place to promote challenge. Activities are planned to meet the needs of pupils, and teaching is monitored regularly by leaders to ensure good progress is made.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The curriculum of St. Rose's Catholic Infant School is well planned and is based on the delivery of the Curriculum Directory in an engaging and creative way. Curriculum resources, particularly in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), are used imaginatively and thoroughly engage pupils. Most pupils make good progress because the curriculum is progressively structured. The school uses 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' scheme and supplements this with work based on Caritas themes. Pupils were studying stewardship during the inspection and making links with *Laudato Si*. The school has also ensured that religious education permeates through other subject areas, for example the mapping of the roads to the Church in maths, the extensive range of reading material with a religious focus in classrooms and in the library, as well as in the outdoor learning area. Books are chosen to reflect and celebrate diversity and are attractively displayed at an appropriate height. Pupils attain well in religious education and this attainment is on par with other core subjects. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and have a good attitude to learning. They take a great pride in their books and enjoyed showing their work to inspectors and engaging in conversation about aspects of their learning. Overall, the typicality of teaching is never less than consistently good, teaching is effective and good support is offered to ensure most pupils make good progress. Pupils are religiously literate. The parish priest, along with the link governor for RE are both actively involved in supporting religious education in St. Rose's. They are familiar with current developments and contribute positively to RE in school. Senior leaders are very well supported by both the link governor for RE and the parish priest, and this has a great impact on the development of this creative and vibrant community.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupil achievement is good and senior leaders use appropriate benchmarks to measure progress. Assessment pieces at the end of topics are well scaffolded to ensure pupils have tools to consider their responses. However, on occasion, scaffolding limits opportunities for pupils to express themselves independently. Good progress is made by most pupils and there is a good level of challenge planned in most lessons. Inspectors observed practitioners in a Reception class using high quality dialogue to provide opportunities for pupils to gain deeper understanding of the Annunciation. In the outside area, staff dialogue was very focused on learning outcomes and good progress was made in the lesson, however this is not consistent across Early Years and in some instances learning opportunities were lost because dialogue did not probe deeply enough. Pupils attitude to learning is good, they are consistently positive and engaged. In a Year 2 class, pupils were learning about the Holy Spirit, the creativeness of the general teaching activity using eggs and ice ensured a high level of pupil engagement. Work in books show that teachers extend learning using appropriate scaffolding. Pupils know what to do to improve their work, however there is limited opportunity for extended pieces of writing in religious education. Pupils' religious literacy is good, and they are confident in their use of religious language. Pupils in Early Years could explain the term Annunciation as they took part in role play in the attractive outdoor area.

The quality of teaching**is good**

Teachers have high expectations; they plan lessons that inspire pupils and deepen their religious literacy. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and demonstrate confidence when teaching abstract concepts for pupils such as the Holy Spirit. The Year 2 lesson during which the teacher asked pupils to crack open raw eggs and observe the three parts that made up one egg had pupils enthusiastically comparing what they saw with the concept of the Trinity. Pupils were able to link their learning to scripture providing evidence of high-quality religious literacy. Some pupils were beginning to work independently.

In a Reception class lesson observed, staff taught the Annunciation in role play which captured the imagination of pupils and encouraged them to dress up themselves as the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary after the input session. Staff in Reception were adept at using high quality dialogue with pupils to consolidate learning and further challenge thinking. Pupils knew what they needed to do to improve. The success of this lesson was evidenced in the religious literacy used by pupils both outside as they used resources to re-enact the Annunciation and inside in the reading area as pupils enjoyed reading the Annunciation story. The outdoor area was used creatively to reinforce learning, pupils were engaged and eager to do well. Pupils were for the most part, working well independently. However, high quality staff interaction with pupils is not consistent across key stages and because of this, opportunities to deepen learning were sometimes lost. Some activities planned did not foster independent learning experiences.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education**is good**

The leader for religious education demonstrates a commitment to high standards, she has a clear vision for her subject and has worked hard with senior leaders to embed religious education in all aspects of school. Senior leaders have high expectations and have developed systems to ensure high quality planning and assessment. Leaders are reflective and constantly strive to improve outcomes for pupils. The recent lockdowns and the removal of the obligation for weekly attendance at Mass has presented many challenges. Leaders including governors, have been resourceful in their efforts to mitigate any detrimental effect this may have had on pupils in terms of their religious education. The parish priest has worked hard to ensure his presence in school encourages pupils to see the role of the Church and understand its mission in their religious education journey. This results in a shared focus on improving religious teaching and learning. Leaders take part in opportunities to share ideas with each other and within their deanery schools.

Self-evaluation is accurate and senior leaders know their school well. There are strategies in place to address areas for improvement.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Further develop opportunities for pupils to demonstrate independence in their learning.
- Deepen children's knowledge and understanding of religious education using scripture and higher order questioning.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has addressed the key issue from the last inspection, 'Research ways to introduce more awareness of the Dominican educational traditions of the search for truth in line with the school's foundation and charism', in a creative and effective way. The school has ensured that pupils are aware of the school's Dominican charism by ensuring Dominican values of community life, common prayer, study and service are taught. The school has also established the 'Dom Squad' a pupil group named after the school's patron saint which has responsibility for planning collective acts of worship, caring for the school community and distributing the 'Wednesday Word'.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

RE receives 10% of curriculum time across key stages and there is no doubt that religious education is at the heart of the school curriculum. Leaders have considered every aspect of the school when considering how to evidence their commitment to religious education as the core of the curriculum. Displays are creative and tasteful in their design in the communal areas. An example of a maths display with a scripture reference, 'God loves you so much ...even the hairs on your head are counted' (Luke 12:7), was evidence of the commitment to ensuring religious education permeates every subject. Pupils had just been learning about Hinduism in other faiths; they had been learning about Diwali and to consolidate, the home corner in Early Years was still themed to allow pupils to consolidate their learning and make Hindu cuisine. Traditional prayers are on display and the visitor is left in no doubt about the time of the liturgical year and the feast associated in the month in question. The 'Whispering Woods' was themed in a Remembrance focus during this inspection and pupils enthusiastically made poppy wreaths and were able to articulate their symbolism. There was an element of awe and wonder as pupils worked diligently in the woods. The standard of display is high, the visitor is attracted to examine every area of this school and is well informed of the purpose of each display through the text and creative artwork. The prayer garden of Saints Rose and Dominic is inviting and easily accessible. Pupils were actively involved in creating this space and the community contributed to its development. They are enthusiastic about its use by means of prayer passes and reflected upon the importance of using the space appropriately. Leaders support staff well in their professional development for the teaching of religious education.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is outstanding

Worship and prayer are central to the life of school and in observed collective acts of worship there were opportunities in place for traditional prayer as well as reflective prayer. Pupils' spiritual development is enabled through excellent opportunities for quiet reflection and comments such as 'God has heard you pray for everyone else' to a pupil are the norm. In Reception pupils sang 'Rise and Shine' to greet the Bible and brought their own contributions to the prayer table. The Word was presented through Godly Play. The sacred space was set up with reverence and respect, and because of this the pupils behaved accordingly. Music created awe and wonder and was specially chosen to link to scripture. It is evident that pupils' liturgical formation is well planned, and pupil led worship is common practice. Collective acts of worship observed in Year 1 offered pupils opportunities to engage in planning and preparation at their level. Good religious artifacts were used, pupils were respectful and offered time to reflect. In Year 2 pupils clearly enjoyed participating in a collective act of worship, the teacher created a reflective mood using music and religious artifacts. Pupils are used to engaging spiritually and the culture promotes very positive experiences of the breadth and richness of Catholic tradition.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –**is outstanding**

Since the last inspection the school addressed issues raised by establishing a pupil group aptly named the 'Dom Squad'. Pupils in the Dom Squad deliver the 'Wednesday Word', water the plants in the prayer garden, go litter picking and plan collective worship. They fulfil their role using the four pillars of the Dominican community and because of this, pupils clearly understand the theology underpinning their work. All pupils are aware of the values of the Dominican Community, and they feel proud to be members of the Squad. Pupils who are not members of the Dom Squad do not feel left out because they can become associate members and engage in work carried out by the Squad. The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop and celebrate their gifts. Pupils enjoy planning worship and choosing Bible stories to enhance appreciation. Pupils are enthusiastic about the 'Whispering Woods' and can readily recognise how their work in the wood links to *Laudato Si*. Pupils explained that their voice is heard in school and gave an example of their direct involvement in planning and naming the new prayer garden. Pupils could explain how they support the Samaritans, the Blind Centre, CAFOD and the air ambulance. They understood that these agencies are not all funded and therefore rely on their support.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**is outstanding**

Parents are very happy with the religious education and spiritual growth opportunities their children receive at St. Rose's Catholic Infant School. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and expressed their delight with their children's progress. A parent explained that as a family where English is an additional language their child helps them learn prayers in English, another commented on how their child has 'love in his heart for Jesus' and attributed this to his experience in school. Parents explained that the partnership is very strong, one parent whose child had additional needs said she received complete reassurance from the school and remarked on how much she values the open-door policy and availability of the headteacher. Another praised the preparation made by St Rose's before her twins started school when photos were taken of the staff and the classroom so her children could feel reassured and could talk about their impending start at home.

Parents explained that the school has very strong links with St Cuthbert Mayne and are happy that the school prepares pupils well for the next stage of learning.

The Parish priest also commented on how the ethos is lived at St. Rose's; pupils know what is expected of them as Christians. A non-Catholic parent felt so included in the family of St. Rose's and was so impressed with the ethos of the school and how people prayed together that she had her child baptised once she was in school.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school**is outstanding**

St. Rose's Catholic Infant School is fully committed to the Church's mission in education. This is demonstrated in the way that pupils were proud to show inspectors their school crest and explain that they understood the word "Veritas". They were equally proud to explain who the patron saint of their class was and what it was that they had accomplished to become a saint. Senior leaders enable pupils and staff to experience lots of opportunities for a Catholic way of living. There are numerous visual examples of the four pillars of the Dominican charism, and these are clearly understood by pupils who were able to explain the pillars to inspectors. They were also able to talk about the dignity of the human child. It is clear that the school's achievement in gaining the silver

award for 'Rights Respecting Schools' and the associated class charter has been linked in a highly effective way to their learning in RE. St. Rose's is a vibrant Catholic school where senior leaders are the driving force in ensuring pupils have experiences that allow them to begin their journey of discipleship for life.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Provide further opportunities to promote independent child-led worship.

Information about this school

- The school is a two form entry Catholic infant and nursery school in the locality of Hemel Hempstead.
- The school serves the parishes of SS Mary & Joseph, Boxmoor, St. Marks, Warners End, Church of the Resurrection, Grovehill and Our Lady Queen of all Creation, Adeyfield.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 84%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 10% and from other faiths is 0%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith (4%).
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 45%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 2.
- There are (11) 5% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 1 has an Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP). 5 pupils are undergoing external advice, support and preparation for EHCP application.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is 29% which is just below average (34%).
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is 19% which is average (21%). *
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. (19 pupils)
- 24 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (11%).

Department for Education Number	919 3409
Unique Reference Number	117484
Local Authority	Hertfordshire County Council

Type of school	Infant & Nursery
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	219
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Sarah Kelly
Headteacher	Mrs Ella Ryan
Telephone number	01442 398855
Website	www.stroses.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stroses.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 November 2015
Grade from previous inspection	
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection seven lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended three number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Ms Evelyn Ward

Lead Inspector

Ms Cynthia Ní Loingsigh

Associate Inspector

Ms Anne Moloney

Associate Inspector

Ms Linda McDonald

Shadow Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

Vaughan House
46 Francis Street,
London
SW1P 1QN

T: 020 7798 9005
E: nancyconoboy@rcdow.org.uk
W: <http://education.rcdow.org.uk>