

Report of the Denominational (Canon 806 & Section 48)
Inspection of
(Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

DfE No: 9262022
URN: 142732

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Dr Susan Wilkinson

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Kim Payne
Head of School: Mrs Felicity Hope

Denominational Inspector: Mrs Margaret Stewart
Shadow Inspector: Mrs Pam Walker

Date of Inspection: 10th February 2020

Date and grade of previous inspection:
S48 Inspection Monitoring Visit February 2018. Grade 1

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St. Francis of Assisi School is a Catholic Primary school situated near the centre of Norwich. It sits within a mixed housing area and serves the parishes of St. John's Cathedral and St. George's Sprowston. Pupils come from as far as Wymondham and Poringland. It became part of the St. John the Baptist Catholic Multi – Academy Trust (CMAT) in May 2016. There are 415 pupils on roll from a range of cultural backgrounds with 97% being from Catholic families. 2% are from other Christian denominations and 1% are from other world faiths. 13% of teaching staff and 31% of support staff are Catholic. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs or a disability (SEND) is 14% with 4 pupils being supported with an Educational Health Care Plan. The Head of School is also the religious education (RE) leader and there is an Executive Head who oversees this school as well as being the Primary Improvement Lead for other Catholic primary schools within the CMAT.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL. Grade 1

St Francis of Assisi is an outstanding Catholic school. As the motto board at the entrance to St. Francis' confirms, this is a place of spirituality where everyone has a clear commitment to living out their mission statement 'Learning and Growing together in God's Love' through aspiration, innovation and diversity. The Catholic identity is visibly embedded in the attitudes, behaviours and inclusive relationships modelled and witnessed in school. The creative and vibrant environment is outstanding and celebrates the diversity of the Catholic faith with its rich traditions of worship, prayer and service. Pupils state they are proud of their school and that they enjoy their work and their friendships "At St. Francis' everyone is really friendly and there is always new things happening". Parents report that they are always warmly welcomed into school and are involved with every aspect of their children's development. Speaking with gratitude a parent said, "You can approach anyone in school if you have a concern". The executive headteacher and head of school are passionate about the provision of religious education (RE) and empower teachers to deliver outstanding care and education to their pupils. The strong culture of inclusivity ensures everyone is made to feel welcome and is helped to thrive, be their best and achieve well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed the role of the parish priest within all aspects of school life.
- Develop and formalise the Adult Chaplaincy Team to include training and release time to fulfil their valued role in shaping Catholic Life and Collective Worship.
- Continue to build expertise in moderation with staff and CMAT colleagues to increase confidence in agreeing standards in RE.
- Continue to embed the systems for collecting and analysing data in RE for groups of learners so that gaps and strengths can be identified, understood and addressed.

CATHOLIC LIFE:

Grade 1

Pupils wholeheartedly contribute to and take increasing responsibility within the Catholic Life of the school leading to the deepening of their spiritual, moral and social development. There is a strong understanding of what it means to belong to an inclusive Christian community evidenced by the wealth of opportunities to put one's faith into action. Enthusiastic fundraising for local, national and global charities demonstrates everyone's pride and purpose in being able to make a positive difference to the lives of others. The role of chaplaincy is a vibrant element in the school, inspiring pupils to be active and prayerful

Christians. Pupils benefit from the support of the chaplaincy in their sacramental life and the newly appointed chaplain will be instrumental in developing this further.

Everyone is recognised as part of God's family and the diversity of the school community is celebrated and explored in a positive way. Much work has been established in engaging parents in the learning and worship alongside their children and this continues to be a focus for the future. St. Francis' school is a place where strong Catholic values are given the utmost importance. A monthly focus on a Christian value ensures it is embedded and experienced in daily life. Each value is modelled and lived out in the nurturing and respectful relationships in school with the expectation that it is shared beyond the school gate. The pastoral support for adults and pupils alike is outstanding. Adults in school describe being deeply valued and appreciated for who they are and feel trusted as professionals. During the inspection the current focus on the value of 'compassion' was clearly demonstrated by the work of the dedicated wellness team. Children benefit from support for emotional concerns with targeted sessions and lunch time drop-ins. Parents commented that this is a highly valued resource for their children. The behaviour of pupils observed in collective worship, lessons and around school was exemplary, demonstrating further the deep pride and respect pupils have for their school, themselves and each other.

Leaders and governors provide strong role models in promoting the highest expectations for the Catholic Life of the school. They are a visible and approachable team, supporting all events during the school year including Masses and celebrations, fundraising events, class based days with parents and exhibitions. Leaders prioritise the rigorous monitoring of RE targets included in the School Development and Improvement Plan (SDIP) and governors effectively challenge the developments and outcomes so that 'next steps' can be carefully planned using termly milestones. The RE leader works collaboratively within the CMAT and is instrumental in leading improvements in RE.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

Grade 1

Pupils demonstrate great interest and enthusiasm for their learning in RE. During the learning walk, in all classes, pupils could be observed tackling challenging activities, exploring deep concepts, and engaging in discussions using a rich religious vocabulary. In the Early Years, pupils were absorbed in making bracelets with pasta and paper fish. A teaching assistant carefully prompted them to recall and talk about the story of the loaves and fishes. One child remarked "It's a miracle!" Another child, making bread rolls retold the story accurately while she was kneading her dough. Within the setting of a beautiful prayer grotto, celebrating prayer and family life, pupils come to write their own prayers and draw pictures independently. Key Stage 1 pupils were learning about prayer in its different forms. It was evident that the experience of quiet, reflective prayer is embedded. Pupils respond reverently and thoughtfully and are led by careful questioning and engaging visuals. In lower Key Stage 2 pupils work collaboratively using rubrics to self- evaluate their learning in RE and are given differentiated challenges. Pupils observed were totally absorbed in a 'Tarzia' task. The activity explored pupils' new and prior knowledge and understanding about the sacraments while challenging pupils to justify and explain their thinking. In one group, sensitive and open questioning relating to the parable of the sower, allowed pupils to give heartfelt, honest answers, to show understanding by making links with scripture and to take risks with their responses. In upper Key Stage 2, one class sang the 'Lamb of God' with great reverence and presence. Other pupils were working collaboratively to explore the meaning of different parts of the Mass. The manner in which pupils expressed their engagement with the lesson was outstanding. Using an increasingly developed and often extensive religious vocabulary, the groups expressed ways of how each part of the Mass led to opportunities to deepen their relationship with God.

Nearly all pupils achieve well in RE from their starting points. Attainment and progress demonstrates that the majority of pupils achieve expected or better than expected outcomes. The planning and teaching of RE is of a high quality and supports nearly all pupils to achieve well. The pace and design of lessons demonstrate increasing teacher confidence and skills in enriching and challenging pupil's knowledge and understanding in RE including other religions. Pupils are motivated to be confident learners by working both collaboratively and individually. They are given opportunities to extend their learning in RE through cross curricular themes and mediums thus promoting moral, ethical and theological development. Knowledge organisers developed around RE topics have deepened the understanding of themes in RE for teachers and pupils alike. The resource includes important links that allow for maximum retrieval, prompts for big questions, an overview of key learning and timelines to give context for learners. Marking and feedback strategies are in line with the school's marking policy and in many books, there is evidence of responses to challenging questions, peer evaluation and appropriate differentiation, ensuring most pupils maximise their learning. 'I Can Statements' are used effectively in clarifying standards in RE for both teachers and pupils. Although present in most books, the essential recording of the learning objectives in some books would give a clearer focus and direction for learners. The use of rubrics challenge learners to reflect on their progress and plan what they need to do to improve, even within that same lesson.

The focussed and dedicated leadership, has led to a range of highly effective strategies being in place, which ensure RE is of the highest quality in teaching, delivered by skilled teachers, pupil learning and assessment. Extending RE subject knowledge is a continuous priority for leaders, evidenced in all action plans for improvement. Employment of learning toolkits are based on research led foundations, impacting on the quality of teachers' professional knowledge and skills for teaching. Governors ensure that RE is generously funded and that 10% of teaching time is dedicated to RE in line with the Bishops' recommendations. The school follows the Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) scheme 'A Journey in Love,' which is one of the recommended schemes approved by the Bishop.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

Grade 1

Collective worship is central to the daily life of the school. Pupils and adults alike understand its purpose and value within their Catholic Christian community. The experience of living and working in a prayerful community clearly impacts on the spiritual and moral development of all and celebrates the inclusive nature of the school. The Gospel assembly observed on the day of the inspection demonstrates that all pupils and staff value and deeply engage with the prayer life in school. The use of scripture expressed through art, age appropriate questioning linked to previous learning and heartfelt singing, inspired its clear message and mission of 'spread your light'. There is a deep respect for all forms of prayer and pupils state that "it is an opportunity to get closer to God and share all your worries with him". The sacraments are clearly understood by the pupils who are able to articulate their importance as celebrations on a faith journey. A number of children demonstrated a clear understanding of the sacraments; they are "special meetings with Jesus" and "make you stronger in your belief."

The opportunities for pupils to plan, resource and deliver collective worship are outstanding. The role of the junior ministers has transformed the prayer life of the school. Here pupils relish the responsibility of planning and delivering all forms of collective worship throughout the liturgical year. They plan, deliver and set up for class Masses, lead prayer stations during Rosary Week and Lent, ensure that prayer tables in their classes are engaging and relevant and undertake being excellent role models for others during collective worship. The active role of ministry to others is admired and respected by the whole school community. Creative provision is made for pupils to broaden their experience of worship. Pupils enjoy visits to Norwich Cathedral and Walsingham for Masses and prayer days, sometimes with other schools within the CMAT. Parents are invited to speak in assembly about other worship

traditions from around the world and there are opportunities to experience 'Taize' reflections during Advent and Lent. The impact of such diverse experiences lead pupils' to a greater awareness of the richness and commonality of worship.

Leaders ensure that the prayer life of the school is given the highest priority and there has been rich investment in training, resourcing and promoting collective worship. A particular focus on increasing pupil participation and involvement in leading collective worship has led to a vibrant and growing chaplaincy team being embedded. There are plans to develop the roles further by supporting pupils to take greater responsibility for planning and leading whole school worship. The setting up of the highly effective adult chaplaincy team has led to the success of the junior chaplains, Minnie Vinnies and other pupil leaders having a full and active role in the service to others in school and within the community. Other training from the IGNITE team and the chaplain from Notre Dame High School has given further value to the expertise of chaplaincy. The prayerful celebrations and sacramental life of the school carefully reflects the liturgical year. Rich opportunities are planned by teachers and leaders to include the diverse community of families of St. Francis'. Governors ensure that collective worship is regularly monitored and their findings impact effectively on improvements. Continuing professional development (CPD) is a constant priority on the RE action plan, leading to all staff being increasingly confident in delivering quality collective worship

The diocesan inspectors wish to thank the executive headteacher, head of school, the staff, pupils, governors and the whole school community for their very warm and friendly welcome and their valuable input into the life of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary school.



EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE

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10th February 2020

Dear Pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We were very impressed with how much you do to make your school a special place within your community. When we looked at your religious education (RE) workbooks and your work on the beautiful displays around school we could see that you take pride in yourselves and your learning in RE.

Here are some of the things we especially liked

- Your teachers plan exciting lessons so that you learn well in RE and deepen your understanding of the Catholic faith
- The displays in school are vibrant and interesting, they show that you celebrate your Catholic faith, live out Christian values and learn about other religions.
- Your adult and junior chaplaincy teams work hard so that you benefit from many opportunities in prayer and worship during the year.
- The adults in school take good care of your wellbeing so that you can thrive and grow.

We have asked your teachers to consider that your parish priest becomes an important person in school to help you on your faith journey and that the adult chaplains are given time to carry out their important work in supporting the prayer life of the school. We have also asked that your teachers continue to look at your work and talk about it together so that they can decide how well you are doing in your learning in RE and how to improve it.

Thank you

Yours sincerely,

Name Margaret Stewart
Diocesan Inspector

Name Pam Walker
Shadow Diocesan Inspector