



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

THE ORATORY R.C. PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

Oliver Road, Ladywood, Birmingham, B16 9ER

Inspection dates:

11th & 12th July

Lead Inspector:

Maureen O'Leary

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: **Good**

Catholic Life: Good

Religious Education: Good

Collective Worship: Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection: *Outstanding*

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- The mission of the school, following the words of Blessed John Henry Newman, 'Shine as to be a light to others,' is known and understood by pupils, staff and governors. It directs their thoughts and actions in all areas of school life.
- Staff and governors ensure that pupils learn and grow in a nurturing and caring environment, where they are valued and developed spiritually and morally.
- The support of the priest chaplain has a profound effect on the Catholic Life of the school community. His living witness of faith in Jesus Christ is an inspiration to pupils and staff.
- Religious Education is appreciated by pupils and staff as an important subject. Pupils are generally very interested in their work and have a good subject knowledge. They understand that their learning in Religious Education influences the way that they should live.
- Collective Worship is a cherished and regular part of school life. Meaningful and varied experiences of prayer are planned and provided by staff, the priest chaplain and, increasingly, by pupils.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- Monitoring processes are not used sufficiently well, so that they effectively support sustained improvement to Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.

- Teaching and learning in Religious Education does not consistently challenge the most able or support those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Until recently, pupils have not had enough opportunities to plan and lead aspects of Catholic Life and Collective Worship.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish and maintain meaningful and manageable processes for monitoring and evaluating Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship. These processes should lead to specific actions that develop areas that require improvement.
- Ensure consistently good standards of teaching in Religious Education through:
 - Sharing best practice to support and challenge pupils;
 - Induction of new staff and deputy Religious Education subject leader;
 - Improving the use of marking and feedback.
- Increase the opportunities for all pupils to lead aspects of Catholic Life and Collective Worship.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.	Good

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

- The pupils are very proud of Blessed John Henry Newman, one of the three school patron saints. They are deeply committed to following his advice to, "Shine as to be a light to others." Pupils explained that this school motto inspires them to, "Be a better person," and to, "Set an example to others, by even just smiling."
- The school environment attractively and successfully promotes Catholic Life. Quality displays teach pupils about the school patrons, class saints and the virtues promoted in the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile (CSPP). Pupils appreciate how the school grounds, including the 'Shine' hedge and recently developed prayer garden, help them to remember their school motto and inspires them to take care of the world God gave them.
- A thoughtful choice of class of saints has taken into consideration pupils' opinions and ideas. As a result, the chosen saints are relevant, in regard to gender and ethnic group, and are inspirational faith models.
- Pupils are well behaved and welcoming to all. The headteacher's award for 'Shining as to be a light for others' and rewards for thinking and behaving like Fortitude help pupils to recognise that they are responsible for their own actions. Pupils also help each other to live out the virtues promoted in the CSPP. They have a sense of value

for each person, which is reflected in their desire to forgive one another when things go wrong.

- Pupils support the Catholic Life of the school in a number of ways. All pupils actively take part in fundraising activities for charities and are concerned about saving a local well used green area. They all try to look after one another and some act as playground friends, while Year 5 are guardian angels to children in Reception class. Older pupils are particularly supportive of younger pupils when walking to the local parish church, acting as excellent role models.
- Recently, a group of Year 6 pupils have developed a prayer garden to promote the Pope's teaching in 'Laudato Si'. They have shown great enthusiasm for this project to protect God's creation. This and similar projects should be encouraged for other pupils in the future, so that they can take a lead in planning and leading aspects of Catholic Life.
- The very regular visits of the priest chaplain, as well as other clergy from the parish, greatly enhances the Catholic Life of the school. The chaplain celebrates the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly at the school and provides excellent support for sacramental preparation. All pupils and staff deeply value his presence in the school and the spiritual and pastoral support he gives.
- Pupils in key stage 2 benefit from a variety of retreat experiences, such as Alton Castle, St Mary's Oscott and St Paul's Girls School.
- Parents who spoke to the inspectors and those who responded to a questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the impact the school has on their children's spiritual and moral development. They particularly value how the school supports their children's behaviour and teaches core values, even during times of staffing changes. Parents of other faiths appreciate how the school enhances their children's faith, even though it is different to the Catholic faith. They also feel well informed about sacramental preparation and supported by the school and chaplain.
- Relationships and sex education (RSE) is taught in accordance with the teachings of the Church. Senior leaders have planned further training for RSE in response to national developments.
- Most pupils have a good sense of their own vocation. Their secure knowledge of their school motto and patrons, (Our Lady of the Oratory, Blessed John Henry Newman and Saint Philip Neri) has helped them understand that God calls them to serve others.
- The school's rich diversity of cultures and faiths is especially celebrated during 'Our Wonderful World Week'. Visits to other places of worship, such as the local Buddhist temple and St John's Church of England, as well as visitors to school, help to deepen pupils' awareness of other faiths. As a result, pupils show respect and consideration to those both within and outside the school community.
- Through their partnership with Caritas Christi in Urbe (a group of local Catholic primary schools and two secondary schools) the school is developing a new whole school curriculum 'Building the Kingdom' which is clearly linked to the Catholic faith.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are firmly committed to the mission of the Church in education. They actively support and promote the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and the areas that need development in regard to Catholic Life. This includes an annual review of the Catholic Life action plan. However, more regular monitoring, which is robustly

evaluated, would ensure that targeted actions could be put in place to improve Catholic Life further.

- The chair of governors (as priest chaplain) visits the school at least twice a week. He has also taken part in some formal monitoring of Catholic Life. This means that he has a clear understanding of the quality of Catholic Life that is provided for pupils. Future involvement, of the newly appointed additional link governor, in regular and robust monitoring and evaluation is needed to provide even greater support for specific improvements.
- Although senior leaders and governors are engaged with diocesan policies and initiatives, increased attendance at diocesan training and briefings would assist the school.
- Staff benefit from attendance at an annual staff retreat, for example to Harvington Hall, led by the priest chaplain or in unison with Caritas Christi Schools. Their understanding of Catholic Life is also supported by joint training through Caritas Christi in Urbe, including the development of the whole school curriculum 'Building the Kingdom'.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education.	Good
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	Good
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	Requires Improvement

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

- Nearly all teachers plan lessons well using the diocesan curriculum strategy 'Learning and Growing as the People of God.' They provide pupils with a good variety of activities that engage and interest them. As a result, most pupils make good progress in lessons. Pupils attainment over the last three years meets diocesan expectations.
- Some teachers, through their use of questioning, provide greater challenge for the most able pupils. During the inspection, the Year 2 teacher skilfully questioned pupils, allowing them time to explore their ideas and thoughts linked to the Pope's teaching in 'Laudate Si'. However, greater challenge for the most able pupils needs to become consistent across the whole school, so that they make better progress.
- The school has accurately identified that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities should also be making better progress. Some actions have been used to address this issue, but little impact has taken place. Further actions are planned for the new school year. These will need to be carefully monitored to ensure they are successful.
- Teachers, especially those new to teaching in a Catholic school, take care to ensure that their subject knowledge is accurate. As a result, most pupils are able to explain their learning well using the correct vocabulary.
- Teachers frequently link learning in Religious Education to readings from the Bible. Consequently, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of appropriate

scripture. Older pupils particularly like using bibles independently during lessons. A year 6 pupil told the inspectors how he felt closer to God when reading the Bible.

- Most pupils are able to see the relevance of what they learn in Religious Education to their own lives. For example, a pupil in Year 1 enthusiastically explained that Jesus' forgiveness of Judas taught her to forgive her brother.
- Pupils generally enjoy Religious Education lessons and are engaged in their learning. As a result, the behaviour of most pupils in lessons is very good. However, during the inspection, where teaching was not closely matched to the needs of the pupils, a small number of pupils lost interest in their work and became distracted.
- The quality of work in pupils' books and its presentation is mostly good. Where it has been less than good it has usually been due to significant changes in staffing and a lack of high expectation from teachers.
- Teachers use a variety of ways to involve pupils in evaluating their work. The impact of this self-evaluation is particularly strong in Year 6. As a result, pupils usually know how well they are doing in lessons.
- Where teaching assistants are used best, they support pupils' learning by providing both challenge and support. However, their role during teacher led discussions needs further development.
- The priest chaplain makes excellent contributions to the teaching of Religious Education throughout the school. He regularly visits Religious Education lessons and guides classes on visits to The Birmingham Oratory.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

- Senior leaders and governors hold the subject of Religious Education in high regard and have ensured that it meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- The Religious Education subject leader has clearly identified a vision for teaching and learning in the subject action plan. However, the objectives in this plan have not been consistently delivered, in part, due to staffing challenges.
- Some monitoring of Religious Education has taken place. This identified where teaching required improvement and where units of work were being taught too slowly. However, monitoring has not been regular or used effectively to improve teaching and learning. As a result, some areas that need improvement have been missed or addressed too late.
- The school has taken part in useful moderation of pupils' work with other primary schools in Caritas Christi in Urbe.
- Staff have received some whole school and individual training. Aspects of this have been effective, such as individual planning support for those new to teaching in a Catholic school. As a number of new staff have been appointed for the new school year, it is important that they receive robust induction training and support to enable them to deliver good standards of teaching.
- A link governor (the priest chaplain) visits the school informally each week and formally each term. As a result, governors have a growing understanding of the standards of teaching and learning in Religious Education. Governors have recently taken action to increase their involvement in frequent and robust monitoring through the appointment of an additional Religious Education link governor. They should check that all monitoring results in strategic action, which leads to improved teaching and learning.
- The subject leadership of Religious Education is currently in a period of transition. The new subject leader commencing from September and newly appointed deputy subject leader should undergo a thorough induction process. They should make use of all available diocesan and Caritas Christi in Urbe support.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of Collective Worship.	Good
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	Good
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	Good

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- Prayer is central to the school's daily life and is a part of all major events in the year. Staff regularly pray together during staff meetings. Collective Worship has a clear impact on the spiritual and moral development of all pupils and staff.
- Part of the school community takes part reverently and confidently in the celebration of Mass each week. Occasionally, the whole or part of the school walks to The Oratory Church. The entire community are inspired by the exceptionally engaging homilies given by the priest chaplain. During the inspection, with the participation of Year 6 pupils, he acted out a television interview with saints linked to the school, which was very interesting and thought-provoking.
- Support from the priest chaplain means that pupils are able to participate in Benediction, Adoration and the Stations of the Cross throughout the school year.
- Some key feasts and seasons are celebrated jointly with the parish. The crowning of Mary in May and the feast of Corpus Christi both involved the school and parish community bearing public witness to the Faith, as they processed between the Church to the school. Pupils also participate in shared liturgies with other Caritas Christi in Urbe group schools. These times of worship help pupils to understand that they are part of a wider church family.
- The pupils sing joyfully during Collective Worship and hymn practice. They are sometimes accompanied by a seminarian from The Birmingham Oratory on the piano. Worship through singing is a strength of the school.
- New quality online resources have recently been provided for teachers to support their planning and delivery of class Collective Worship. Their impact has yet to be assessed.
- Pupils have experience of a variety of methods and styles of prayer. They have a growing knowledge and understanding of traditional Catholic prayers. They are able to write and share their own prayers. Many pupils find the regular times of silence during worship particularly useful because they feel it brings them closer to God. This was seen by the lead inspector, as Year 5 pupils prayed reverently during class worship in the recently transformed prayer garden.
- During this term, pupils have been increasingly planning and leading Collective Worship. Although it is not consistent, where these opportunities are provided pupils respond with enthusiasm.
- Parents are kept well informed about times of worship through text and the newsletter. They are made to feel welcome to attend Masses and assemblies.
- Thoughtfully presented sacred spaces in classes and communal areas invite pupils and staff to reflect and pray. Currently, a small room is being creatively transformed into a chapel by staff, pupils, the priest chaplain and governors

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

- Senior leaders and governors have ensured that priority is given to daily Collective Worship, including the weekly celebration of Mass either in school or at church. The themes chosen for worship help pupils to learn about the liturgical year as well as about the Church's teaching on social justice.
- Senior leaders and the priest chaplain skilfully plan and deliver Collective Worship, so that it not only celebrates Catholic tradition but also appeals to pupils in a contemporary context.
- Recent training for staff has given them the initial skills and confidence to support pupils as they plan and lead Collective Worship. This initiative needs to continue and develop further.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of Collective Worship because it is reviewed regularly, in an informal way, and sometimes monitored formally. However, little of this monitoring has been evaluated and, in part due to staffing challenges, not all planned monitoring was completed.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	103427
Local authority	Birmingham
<i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i>	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range	3-11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Anton Guziel
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Dickinson
Telephone number	0121 454 0600
Website address	www.oratory.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@oratory.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 th June 2014

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- This one form entry school, in the parish of The Oratory of St Philip Neri Birmingham, serves the Ladywood area and the outskirts of Edgbaston in the inner city of Birmingham. There is a high level of economic and social deprivation in the area.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 70%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is significantly above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is significantly above the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below age related expectations.
- There have been significant changes to the staffing structure and the membership of the governing body since the last inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors – Maureen O’Leary and Karyn Oakley.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school’s provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across seven Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with a number of governors (including the chair of governors and the Catholic Life link governor), the headteacher, representatives from Caritas Christi in Urbe, the Religious Education subject leaders and the parish priest.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass, a key stage assembly led by the headteacher, a class Collective Worship and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils’ behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation, data about pupils’ attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Catholic Life/Religious Education action plan, teachers’ planning and learning journals.