

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



Inspection Report of Denominational Character and Religious Education

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST MARGARET OF SCOTLAND CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Rotheram Avenue, Luton, LU1 5PP

DCSF School No: 821/3355

URN: 109634

Headteacher: Mrs C Boyd
Chair of Governors: Mr M Fielding

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Betts
Associate Inspector: Mrs K Mustow

Date of inspection: 25th June 2009

Date report issued: 9th July 2009

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

Description of the School

St Margaret of Scotland school is a large primary school for pupils aged 4 to 11 years. In September 2008 the infant and junior schools amalgamated into the new primary school although the work to physically link the two school buildings has not yet begun. The number of pupils on roll is 468, 91 % of whom are baptised Catholic. The school serves three parishes in Luton; St Margaret of Scotland, Our Lady Help of Christians and Holy Ghost. About half the pupils are White British with others from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. A small proportion of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who find learning difficult is above the national average. The school has gained the "Investors in Families" award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade: 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Margaret of Scotland school is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher and deputy very effectively promote a strong Catholic ethos and identity and are well supported by the staff. The very high quality of care and well-being of the whole community is a great strength of the school. Individual needs of both children and families are effectively provided for. Relationships between all staff and pupils within the school are very good. Pupils said "The school is one big family, we all respect one another". Prayer and worship have a strong central role in the school's life. The pupils' social and moral development is very good and this is reflected in their behaviour and attitudes. Religious Education (RE) has a high profile in the school. Pupils make good progress throughout their school life in knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade 1

The school has a very good capacity to improve. The headteacher, new leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the future and have effectively communicated this to the staff. The self evaluation of the school is comprehensive and accurate with appropriate action plans. The headteacher and deputy have a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. The rigorous monitoring with evaluations and feedback will ensure improvements become embedded in school life. All staff are committed to the success of the school and to further developing their skills through training.

What the school should do to improve further

- revise the Mission Statement to unite the amalgamated school.
- develop RE assessment and use the information gained to inform future planning so that pupils are challenged to reach the next level of attainment.
- moderate RE assessments to ensure consistency of judgements throughout the school.

Leadership and Management

Grade 1

The dedicated leadership from the headteacher, leadership team and governors effectively promotes the unity of the two former school communities whilst also maintaining a very strong Catholic identity. The recent carnival for St Margaret of Scotland was an outstanding example of the whole school and its wider community combining together in celebration. The mission statements are known by pupils and underpin all daily activities. It is planned to review these. Attractive high standard displays around school confirm the Catholic identity. Governors are supportive and well informed. The pupils' pastoral care is a strength of the school. Pupils appreciate their individual needs being catered for by the many and varied small group or individual opportunities they are given. Pupils value the friendly, caring attitude of the teachers who listen to them, provide fun activities and encourage their learning. The curriculum provides many and varied opportunities for extra spiritual experiences, for example through the Zoo Lab visit when pupils displayed awe and wonder whilst handling a variety of different species of creature. Parents are extremely supportive of the school and appreciate the groups offered to support their needs. Parents receive regular information about future events and religious education topics and how they can help with the learning at home.

The prayer life of the School

Grade 2

Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school community. The school provides a good range of worship opportunities including class-led assemblies and meditations as well as quiet reflection sessions available within the prayer room and organised by pupils themselves. Pupils compose prayers either as part of their religious education learning or to use in their acts of worship. During worship dance, drama, story, scripture, music and visual presentations are used effectively to engage the children's interest and develop their thinking. Pupils' high quality and enthusiastic singing enhances the worship. Worship and liturgies are well planned and evaluated. Pupils are very respectful during prayer and enjoy these experiences. Worship makes a significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Attractive prayer tables provide a focus for worship. Mass is celebrated at various times throughout the year and parents and parishioners are invited. There are plans to increase the number of liturgies held. The school has links with all the local parishes.

Chaplaincy

Grade 2

Chaplaincy provision makes a significant contribution to the spiritual life and the well-being of the whole community. The leadership supports the chaplaincy work and the whole community understand the important role it plays in the life of the school. However, the various members providing this work are not yet a cohesive team with structures in place which would enhance and unite the provision. Pupils speak highly of the accessibility of the provision to support their varied needs. Parents appreciate the help they are given by the family workers and the approachability of the school staff.

Community Cohesion

Grade 2

The school is a welcoming inclusive community where all members are valued. Diversity is effectively celebrated using pupils' own contributions. Pupils are given opportunities to collaborate with others from different faith backgrounds through sporting and curriculum events. They show compassion for others by giving to local, national and global charities and the school effectively enhances their knowledge of these through inviting representatives to explain their work. Year 2 children have produced a collage picture to hang in the local home for the elderly. The school has very good links with a variety of local schools and staff share their expertise. Pupils participate well in local community activities such as the Luton "Student Voice" project. The school's family learning groups are available to all adults in the wider community. Pupils are taught respect for other world religions. Reflection opportunities are given for pupils to link their learning with their own experiences. Parents, parishioners and the local community are invited to share celebrations.

Achievements and Standards in Religious Education

Grade 2

Pupils make good progress in RE throughout their school life. Most achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and some exceed this. Pupils are able to apply the religious learning to their own lives and experience. They know their religious education books are special and these are generally well presented. The religious education work evidences a good coverage of the curriculum with a variety of written activities. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They behave well. Pupils are proud of their school and willingly undertake whole school responsibilities. Older children help younger ones with activities. Pupils appreciate their opinions being sought and their contributions valued; for example their ideas for lunch time seating. Pupil and staff achievements are recognised and celebrated.

Quality of Teaching and Learning in Religious Education

Grade 2

The quality of religious education lessons is good with some outstanding lessons observed. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is sound and they plan thoroughly. The learning intentions of the lessons are made explicit to pupils. During the best lessons teachers effectively use visual presentations, meditation, talking partners and interesting activities to motivate pupils in their learning. The activities planned consolidate pupils' thinking but do not always sufficiently challenge the more able. All pupils are assessed regularly and their achievement compared with national attainment levels. The information gained is used to record pupil progress. The school plans to moderate their judgements and link assessment knowledge to RE planning in the future. Marking is

inconsistent throughout the school but the majority praises and affirms the quality of the work and some directs the pupils towards improvement strategies.

Quality of the Religious Education curriculum

Grade 2

The quality of the curriculum is good, and suitable for the age and abilities of the learners. It fulfils the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the "Here I Am" programme with additional work linked to the liturgical year and to the lives of saints. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning and consider how it might be applied in everyday life. St Alban's Abbey is used as an extra learning resource. Religious education is creatively linked to other curriculum areas such as drama, poetry, craft, art and information and communication technology (ICT). Other faiths are taught. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Attractive religious education displays give added value to this core subject. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons especially learning about God and Jesus and those linked to practical activities such as research, drama and illustration.

Leadership and Management in Religious Education

Grade 2

The RE subject leaders are both senior staff and this confirms the high RE profile throughout the school. They are well supported by the school leadership. The curriculum is led and managed very well with clear and appropriate action plans for future development. These are being implemented but are not yet fully embedded into school practice. The teachers are well supported and guided. They regularly undertake training provided by the subject leaders, the Catholic Schools' network and the diocese. The reflection session at the beginning of each module is particularly effective for developing staffs' expertise and their own personal perspective on the topic. RE is rigorously monitored and feedback given. The RE governor is kept well informed of the progress of development plans. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and the school is sensitive to anti-discriminatory practices. Religious education is well resourced with new materials constantly being purchased.