

# Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

## St. Monica's, Hoxton

Hoxton Square, Hackney N1 6NT

Date of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015



### A. Classroom Religious Education

**What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?**

**Overall Grade 2**

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. The school has invested in high quality resources and artefacts, which enhance the content and delivery of religious education. The school is developing its expertise in matching the quality of learning to the Agreed Understandings in the levels of attainment. They fully match all aspects of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, (RECD). Children are religiously literate and understand how what they believe influences the way they live. Secure support and intervention is dedicated to those pupils with significant high levels of need. The other adults in the learning provide effective support and guidance to the pupils. Governors are updated on progress in religious education through the termly headteacher reports to the governing body and the regular visits by the parish priest, who is also the designated governor for religious education. There has been some major improvements to the accommodation and there is planned expansion to admit two year olds in the near future.

### B. The Catholic life of the school

**What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?**

**Overall Grade 2**

The overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school is good. The school has ensured it fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales to deliver the full 10% curriculum across the phases in religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The governing body ensures that the budget has clearly identified priorities for enhancing the religious education and Catholic life. Prayer and worship are at the centre of everyday life in the school. The close proximity of the parish church is a wonderful resource for the school. There is a range of active involvement with the parish community. The parish priest, as a regular visitor provides opportunities for weekly Mass in church. He also supports the sacramental programmes during Advent and Lent with the pupils receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The governing body understands its role within the Diocese, as discussed with those governors able to meet the inspectors. The school promotes strong links with the parents and fully supports all aspects of parish life. One parent described how "the school is our second home and is a community which mirrors what parents do at home." Pupils are confident to describe their active involvement in supporting their local and wider community. Their behaviour in and around the school is exemplary.

## Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited 8 lessons, an assembly and a collective worship, and carried out 8 interviews with school staff, pupils, parents and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St. Monica's, Hackney was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

## Inspection Team

Mrs Tina Cleugh  
Mrs Ann Staunton  
Mr Daniel Keane

Lead Inspector  
Shadow Lead  
Associate Inspector

## Description of School

This voluntary aided school is one form entry in the LA of Hackney and the locality of Hoxton. The school serves the parish of St. Monica's, Hoxton. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 87%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 13% and none from other faiths. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 60%.

There are 236 pupils on roll, with 3 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/Education Health & Care Plans (EHC). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a well above average number of families claiming free school meals. 95 pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

Telephone: 02077395824  
e-mail address: office@st-monicas.hackney.sch.uk

DFE Number: 204/3553  
URN Number: 100268

Headteacher: Mrs Amanda Ruthven,  
Interim Headteacher: Mrs Loy Delapenha  
Chair of Governors: Mr Tim Hart

Date of previous inspection: November 2009  
Previous Inspection grades: Good

<b>Key for inspection grades:</b>	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

## **A. Classroom Religious Education**

*How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?*

### **What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?**

The school has developed an electronic system for tracking and monitoring progress in religious education, as for other core subjects.

### **How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?**

#### **Grade 2**

The school is using the 'Come and See' programme and its related links to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, (RECD) from Reception to Year 6. The 'Here I Am' programme is still being delivered in the Nursery. Some teachers have been encouraged to incorporate the structure of the Composite Units into their planning. The four areas of study within the Curriculum Directory are covered within the planned 'Come and See' units and topics. This includes the coverage throughout the liturgical cycle. The range of cover of the other faiths, including Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, is evident from work on display, in the portfolios and from discussion with the pupils. This exploration of the other faiths is supported by a rich range of resources, both those purchased by the school and through their subscription to the library service at Tower Hamlets. This access to resources includes ICT links and subscription to relevant aspects in the 'Come and See' website.

### **Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education**

#### **Grade 2**

Achievement in religious education is broadly in line with that for other core subjects. Good achievement is evident where pupils were challenged to think deeply and to reason through a range of strategies. Where marking moved pupils on in their learning in religious education, there was evidence of good levels of understanding. The school has recognised its need to address the inconsistencies in levelling. There was evidence in Reception and Years 3 and 6, that excellent progress is being made and pupils are developing their religious literacy to higher levels. These included the effective use of scripture to make links between the Old and New Testament. The summative progress of pupils across the phases is monitored through their electronic SIMS system. Groups of pupils are identified for formative tracking in religious education in the same way as in other core subjects. There is evidence in the books and those books available from the previous academic year, to demonstrate the range of progress in religious education, across the school, from their starting points. The school fully participates in both the deanery and diocesan moderation process. The school is being supported by the diocesan advisor to develop their accuracy in moderation and levelling to meet the criteria set out in the Agreed Understanding for the levels of attainment in religious education.

### **The quality of teaching**

#### **Grade 2**

The teaching of religious education observed across the school is variable. In those lessons where teaching was most effective, pupils were encouraged to develop their thinking and reasoning skills, making effective links through well planned probing for deeper levels of learning. The scrutiny of the work in the books provides evidence of good progress overall. Questioning was effective in those

lessons observed, where the teachers had clearly planned open-ended and higher order opportunities to challenge pupils in their thinking and reasoning in religious education. Where subject knowledge was strong, teaching was most effective. In one such lesson a pupil described how, "I enjoy RE lessons because I learn more about God and how I can become closer to him." The role of the other adults in the learning process was notable. This was particularly effective for those pupils with significant additional needs, including the use of makaton signing and appropriate ICT programmes. Pupils demonstrated good attitudes to their learning, including their response to some good next steps in their 'green pen' marking process. Pupils benefit from opportunities to research relevant homework in religious education, including developing their skills in ICT.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 2**

The newly appointed headteacher has a clear vision and purpose to the educational mission of the Church. She is being ably supported by an interim headteacher, during her maternity leave. She met with the inspectors to share her commitment and dedication to her vision to move the school forward, for example through the development of a 'team' approach to leading and managing religious education and the Catholic life of the school. She has identified the strategies being developed to embed systems and structures for monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning strategies in religious education. The school has recognised the need to be more accurate in its own self-evaluation, for identifying key actions for developing the provision for religious education and its effective impact across the phases. The school is committed to empowering new teachers towards the accreditation of the CCRS, as evident in the recent successes of some current teachers in the school.

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

- The school has recognised that the way forward for the leadership and management of religious education is through a 'team' approach, represented by highly effective teachers across the phases and experienced non-teaching colleagues
- The school has agreed the need to ensure that the strategic planning for religious education is highlighted in the school development plan and reviewed annually
- The performance management appraisal process will include specific targets for improving attainment in religious education for all staff

## **B. The Catholic life of the school**

*How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?*

### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The school has identified its intention to empower pupils to plan, prepare and lead liturgies and acts of worship

### **The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget**

#### **Grade 2**

The school fully meets the 10% requirement for religious education as set out by the Bishops' Conference for England and Wales. The governing body have effectively funded a rich range of resources, including Good News bibles, fabrics, such as the beautiful Advent cloth as a centre focus in the hall, a range of age appropriate artefacts, puppets and role play resources. These all support the Catholic life of the school to flourish. The governing body has provided improvements to the accommodation and have planned admission of two year olds, from January 2016, when Bishop Hudson will formally bless and dedicate the new building. This is typical of their ongoing commitment to serving the needs of their local community.

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

#### **Grade 2**

Prayer and worship are central to the Catholic school, including its dedication to celebrating across the liturgical cycle. Annual events, such as crowning Our Blessed Lady, in May, celebrating the holy days, praying the Stations of the Cross, were confidently described by the Justice and Peace group of pupils, who met the inspectors. They are very proud of being 'chosen' to be members of the group and how many of them are altar servers in the parish. The prayer garden provides an oasis of prayer, stillness and reflection with ready access for all members of the community. The pupils outlined how much pride they gain in leading prayer for younger pupils in their prayer garden. Pupils would benefit from opportunities to plan and lead weekly prayer and worship, as well as special liturgies and celebrations. The new school chaplain is becoming more active in the school and works alongside the parish priest. The school fully meets its commitment to daily worship, such as the daily recitation of the Angelus at noon, by the Key Stage 2 pupils, and the age appropriate daily prayers including Grace before and after meals, said across the school. The weekly assembly is based upon the Gospel message through the 'Wednesday Word' and its meaning for pupils in their daily lives. Parents are actively invited and welcomed to attend all prayerful celebrations and assemblies. The school has celebrated the beginning of the Holy Year of Mercy, as evident in their stimulating and stunning display which reflects their mission statement.

### **The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice**

#### **Grade2**

Pupils are proud of their fundraising activities and described the range of Catholic and secular charities they support on a regular basis. These include, CAFOD, Fair Trade, the Catholic Children's Society. The pupils spoke about their annual support during Harvest time to support the

needy and vulnerable in the Hackney Shelter and their parish of St. Monica's and how the choir entertain at the Mildmay Hospital. The pupils understand and are clear about their call to serve with justice and to develop their human flourishing. It will be appreciated by pupils to have the autonomy to plan and discuss their own ideas for service and fundraising. Their attitudes and behaviour demonstrates their understanding and awareness of the theology that underpins their actions of serve to others. The recent review of the mission statement has developed the 'House Saint' system learning about the lives and charism of St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Martin de Porres, St. Therese of Lisieux and St Brigid.

**Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**

**Grade 2**

The school promotes strong links with parents and the parish. They have forged network partnerships within the deanery, the diocese and more recently local Catholic schools. The school fully understands its role within the Diocese and its responsibility to the Bishop. The questionnaire responses from parents were broadly positive and supportive of the school. The parents who met the inspectors fully appreciate the support they receive from the school and how their children are supported, particularly in their faith.

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

**Grade 2**

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school is good overall. The mission statement of "Through God and each other, we learn, love, respect and understand," reflects the school's understanding of itself, as a Catholic school. This reflects its mission and identity as an ecclesial community. The leadership of the headteacher is reflected in the support for the Catholic mission of education. Her drive, dedication to school improvement and development is evident from discussion with her and members of the governing body throughout the inspection process. The recently introduced whole school retreat enables all to examine how and in what way they are serving the church through their varied roles in the school.

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

- The school has identified the importance of empowering the individual groups of pupils to plan, prepare and lead liturgy, acts of worship and fundraising initiatives