

# Catholic Diocese of Northampton



## Inspection Report of Denominational Character and Religious Education

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

### **SACRED HEART VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Langford Drive, Luton, LU2 9AN

DfE School No: 821/3361  
URN: 109640

Head Teacher: Mrs J Cullen  
Chair of Governors: Mr D Byrne

Reporting Inspector: Mrs K Yuen  
Associate Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan

**Date of Inspection: 16 May 2017**  
Date Report Issued: 5 June 2017

Date of previous Inspection: October 2011

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

### **Information about the school**

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School is situated in Stopsley, an urban area in north Luton, and serves the immediate parish and surrounding areas. There are 414 children on roll of whom 92% are Catholic. The school also has a similarly high number of Catholic members of staff, six of whom have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies with a further three currently undertaking the course. 47% of pupils are from ethnic minority groups with 32% having English as an additional language. The school is housed in two adjoining buildings, one accommodating Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and the other, Key Stage 2.

### **Key grades for inspection**

1. Outstanding    2. Good    3. Requires improvement    4. Unsatisfactory

### **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 1**

Sacred Heart Primary School is an outstanding school. It has a strong Catholic ethos with dedicated leadership from the headteacher, who is ably supported by both the leadership and Chaplaincy team. Pupils fully participate in and respond joyously to the outstanding provision for collective worship and prayer life of the school. Catholic identity permeates daily life. The headteacher has invested in training and support for all staff in this area which is clearly having impact. Achievement and progress in religious education are good. Parents praise the standard of care shown by all staff and the strong sense of community within Sacred Heart School.

### **The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 1**

The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement and development. There is a strong leadership team who, on the basis of thorough monitoring and evaluation, continue to build on and develop the school and its Catholic life. The issues from the last inspection were focused on the implementation of the 'Come and See' religious education programme and on reviewing assessment so that grades accurately reflect pupil attainment. These areas have been thoroughly addressed.

The school's self evaluation is detailed and accurate. The inspectors concurred with the judgements made by the school. The staff and governors are committed to continued improvement. The religious education lead and the school leadership team have a very good overall understanding of the school's strengths and development needs. Regular monitoring and evaluation feeds into the school development plan.

School leaders are totally committed to promoting the Catholic dimension of the school and high quality religious education. They have very successfully communicated an inspiring vision for the school leading to its present effectiveness. Sacred Heart School also benefits from a large, effective chaplaincy team which understands the school's needs and is proactive in its support of and work for the community.

The school with its current leadership, governance and Chaplaincy team has the capacity to maintain effectiveness. The governing body are kept informed and support the school well. The school is part of a strong local Catholic network that provides religious education support and training.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- continue to develop the 'Faith Ambassador' initiative involving pupil participation within the prayer life of the school
- encourage more parental participation through increased opportunities in the prayer life of the school.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Grade 1**

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They know and understand the Sacred Heart mission statement and strive to achieve it in all areas of their school life. Pupils are proud of their school and show concern for the well-being of others. This is evident through the exceptional work of the anti-bullying committee (ABC) who have gained the Diana Award for effectiveness. The Faith Ambassadors, although still a developing initiative, are already having an impressive impact on the prayer life of the school through pupil led meditations and assemblies.

All pupils respond extremely well to worship and the prayer life of the school. They participate respectfully and with ease appreciating these experiences as a time of uniting the whole school community. During a guided meditation on the Annunciation children displayed reverence, empathy and absorption. In collective worship observed during the inspection the pupils were attentive, reverent and made heartfelt responses through song and prayer. The pupils' joyous response to collective worship is uplifting and an outstanding feature of the school's prayer life. Reception children learn quickly from the start to pray. They were able to be still and to reflect appropriately.

Chaplaincy provision is a prominent, high-quality feature of school life. The large team comprises of a wide range of people with differing skills. Members work closely to promote the spiritual development of pupils, the Catholic life of the school and to provide valued support to staff. Pupils feel safe, cared for and know where to go and what to do when they need help. They value and respond enthusiastically to liturgies created by the Chaplaincy team. Parents value the care given to their children and the approachability of staff, commenting that, "Sacred Heart is a strong community of which we are proud to be part".

Achievement and progress in religious education are good. Pupils very much enjoy their religious education lessons. They come into school with standards below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6 they are mainly in line with expectations with a small proportion above. Pupils can discuss the topics they cover and relate to them in their own lives. Progress is secure across the school and especially rapid in Reception where children quickly absorb basic concepts, symbolism and religious language. The pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning makes a positive and significant contribution to their achievement. Books are well presented and evidence a range of written tasks and a good coverage of the curriculum.

## **Leaders and managers**

## **Grade 1**

The headteacher, together with the staff, have been very successful in nourishing a school community that rejoices in a shared vision and an inclusive, welcoming ethos. Its members understand and strive to live out the mission statement in daily interactions with each other. The school is effectively managed in a way that ensures regular evaluation of its religious life. Attractive artwork and displays around the school confirm its Catholic identity and the school's pursuit of the common good. The leadership, chaplaincy and family worker teams all work to create a thriving partnership between home and school. All staff receive valuable support through inset and training opportunities. Parents' questionnaires gave evidence of the overwhelming positive view they have of the school.

The religious education subject leader is very well supported by the school leadership. This ensures religious education has a high profile. The religious

education subject leader has a clear knowledge of the strengths of the subject and a plan for improvement that is linked into the whole school development plan. Religious education is monitored consistently by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and impromptu drop ins. The religious education leader provides a detailed review of the subject to the governing body, liaising closely with the link governor. Procedures for assessment of religious education are well established. Pupils are assessed regularly showing individual progress over time. The levels given are moderated both within school and through collaboration with the local Catholic partnership. Assessment data is linked to national expectations.

### **Provision**

### **Grade 1**

The school's provision for prayer and worship is outstanding and a key part of every school celebration. Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school through class prayer times and in assemblies. Pupils celebrate first Friday Mass with parishioners and contribute well to the liturgy. In addition, pupils are given frequent opportunities for spiritual development through meditation and reflection. Worship is well planned with high quality delivery using visual presentations and singing to promote pupils' interest and develop their thinking and participation. An attractive prayer table in each classroom provides a valuable focus for prayer, reflection and learning. These are enhanced by pupil's own contributions to the display. Chaplaincy provision is outstanding and has a significant impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

The quality of teaching and learning is good as evidenced by the outcomes for pupils. All teaching observed was good or better. Pupils were engaged and enthusiastic. Teachers used open ended questioning, discussions with talk partners and an interesting selection of tasks and resources to deepen pupils' learning. Children are at ease using bibles for referencing and were able to locate scripture confidently. They learn well because work engages their interest. Pupil participation is actively encouraged and differentiated work set that allows all pupils to achieve. Formal assessments are undertaken regularly. Knowledgeable teaching assistants provide invaluable support within classes. This is a particular strength. Marking is affirmative and there are examples of next steps being identified. Outstanding practice in the Foundation Stage was very evident in the enthusiastic children who were fully engaged in the well planned activities provided.

The quality of the religious curriculum is outstanding. The "Come and See" programme is used throughout the school and at least 10% of Curriculum time is devoted to religious education. Resources are well managed and support the curriculum. The school is vibrant and rich with religious art that has been created collaboratively. The parents are kept fully apprised of their children's currently learning through a termly newsletter.

The inspectors wish to thank the headteacher, staff and children for their warm welcome and for contributing to a very enjoyable and interesting visit.