



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

St Robert Southwell Catholic Primary School

Slough Lane, Kingsbury Green, London NW9 8YD

Telephone: 0208 204 6148

e-mail address: office@robsouth.brent.sch.uk

DCSF Number: 304/3506

URN Number: 101543

Headteacher: Miss Honor Beck

Chair of Governors: Mr Peter Manning

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 30 March 2010
Date of previous inspection: 29 March 2007

Reporting Inspector: Mr D Scott

Description of School

St Robert Southwell is a one and a half-form entry primary school with Nursery in the Archdiocese of Westminster situated in the London Borough of Brent. The school is oversubscribed and the majority of pupils come from the parish of St Sebastian and St Pancras. The overwhelming majority of pupils are baptised Catholics. There are 18 teachers in the school of whom 89% are Catholic. Nine teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) qualification. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average at 6.4% (23 pupils) and 64.9% (234 pupils) of the pupils are from ethnic minority groups, which is much higher than the national average. The largest ethnic group, apart from White British, is White Irish. Almost a quarter of all pupils speak English as an additional language which is above that found nationally. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs/and or disabilities, including those with statements, is 18% (64 pupils) which is just below average. Attainment on entry to Year 1 is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Robert Southwell is a good school with a strong Catholic ethos. It strives successfully to include each individual and to make every child feel valued in accord with its mission statement. The headteacher, together with senior leaders effectively promotes high expectations for staff and pupils alike to ensure that pupils have the very best opportunities for future success. There are very close links with the local parish and the school does its best to involve parents in the daily work of the school. In this way, St Robert Southwell strives to integrate its day-to-day work with the Church's wider mission. Standards overall are above average although English still outstrips Religious Education at the highest levels of performance. Pupils achieve well because they enjoy their work in religious education classes where teaching is good overall. Religious education is well planned within the overall good curriculum. Prayer and worship underpin the Catholic life of the school so that pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils behave well and really appreciate the school's warm family atmosphere. They have a good understanding of the Church's mission at home and abroad through their support for a number of charities, including that for national charities and overseas projects. The school is well led by the headteacher, senior team and governors who are fully dedicated to nurturing and developing this flourishing Catholic community. The senior team has an accurate evaluation of the next steps for improvement but recognises that there is still work to be done to embed assessment practice and to strengthen formal monitoring procedures of the Catholic life of the school.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

Progress since the last inspection has been good. Systems for the formal monitoring of the Catholic life of the school have improved and are now conducted with a greater degree of rigour. Arrangements for the monitoring of assemblies and sharing good practice are working well but the evaluation of whole-school Masses and other large-scale events tend to be informal and anecdotal. Positive developments have been made in the teaching and assessment of religious education. The review of the Mission statement and its subsequent translation into more parent/child friendly language has been well received. Nevertheless, a number of these

developments have been introduced relatively recently, and although 'green shoots' are beginning to emerge, it is still too early to assess their full impact.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has good capacity to continue to improve and develop. There is a clear vision and direction from the headteacher, leadership team and governors to secure the very best education for all pupils. With an experienced and stable religious education team and the planned strategies to improve assessment and tracking, the school is poised to accelerate its performance and is well placed to meet the exciting developments that lie ahead.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve the quality provision and outcomes in religious education, and increase the proportion of good or better teaching by:
 - ensuring teachers more effectively use day-to-day assessments and review targets more systematically with pupils so they clearly understand how to improve
 - further developing the use of probing questions in lessons which give pupils opportunities to extend and explain their ideas fully, especially for the more able
 - ensuring that class teachers analyse information more robustly by setting clear success criteria against which to evaluate progress and learning
- Strengthen the role of leaders, including Governors, still further in their formal monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

St Robert Southwell is well led and managed. The headteacher's tenacious and passionate leadership of this Catholic community is ably supported by the senior leadership team and governors. There is a clearly shared sense of commitment to promote the Catholic identity of the school that extends beyond classrooms to links with homes and the parish. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and support it well. They share their talents and expertise freely and wisely and are developing their confidence and skill in challenging and holding the school to account. The parish priest regularly celebrates mass for staff, pupils and parents and is involved in other whole-school liturgies. Regular monitoring and honest self-evaluation underpin the school's improvement since the last inspection. Lines of accountability are clear and the school has an accurate understanding of the impact of its provision for the advancement of this Catholic community. It knows its strengths and areas for improvement very well and is working on refining its assessment procedures in religious education even further. As a result, the school provides high quality care and a good education for all groups of children. Close contact with the parish helps the school to keep in touch with families within the community, including those that are hard to reach. The school fulfils its mission as inspired by St Robert Southwell, to 'work hard, aim high and treat everyone with honesty and gentleness'.

Grade 2

The Prayer Life of the School

Prayer and the liturgical life of the school contribute very positively to the pupils' spiritual and moral development. All children are encouraged to participate in the liturgy and in the day-to-day school prayers as appropriate for their age. Prayers throughout the school are both formal and informal. Pupils use their many talents to express their worship through dance, drama, music, reading and altar-serving. Daily collective worship, three assemblies a week and regular attendance at parish masses mean that pupils have progressive opportunities to focus on aspects of the Mass and to become very familiar with the responses so that they can participate comfortably. Assemblies are of good quality and pupils clearly enjoy their active involvement in songs, prayers and responses to parables and gospel stories. For example, during the inspection Key Stage 1 pupils led an impressive assembly for the whole school on 'The Last Supper', which was very well attended by parents and carers. The annual Retreat for Year 4 pupils is well received and offers good opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding of their faith. Display in classrooms and around the corridors, along with the interesting resources such as the prayer tables, provide pupils with stimuli for thought and reflection. This engenders a calm and peaceful learning environment that is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and consideration for others.

Grade 2

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

The school is effective in its promotion of its vision for community cohesion. Pupils display remarkable sensitivity to those less privileged than themselves and high levels of personal commitment to working together for the common good. Amongst numerous examples are raising money for charities such as the Catholic Children's Society and supporting the work of SVP which enable food hampers to be distributed to the needy of the parish. Through its Advent and Lenten alms-giving, the school raises funds each year for nominated charities including Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. There are excellent relationships throughout the school at every level. Vulnerable pupils are well cared for and those from a range of backgrounds, difficulties and challenges are able to integrate successfully. As one pupil commented, 'St Robert Southwell is a very friendly school where we care about each other'. There is a strong Catholic theme of prayer and liturgy in the school, which together with the school's philosophy on inclusion allows suitable opportunities for the sharing and celebration of other faiths and cultures. Pupils mix freely with one another and this has been invaluable in developing their understanding of cultural differences and provides an enriching experience of belonging to a 'Community of Faith'. Partnerships have been developed to further enhance learners' understanding of global issues. For example, pupils have raised funds to support orphaned children in a school in Rwanda and communicate regularly with 'email-pals' from a Catholic school in Uganda.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

The achievements and standards in Religious Education are above average. Pupils make good progress in Religious Education by the end of Year 6. The most able pupils, however, still achieve better in English than in Religious Education despite the school's recent efforts to provide them with wider opportunities for extended writing in Religious Education. In discussion, pupils show a good knowledge of Catholic faith but also of some of the traditions of

other major religions. Pupils' written work is well presented and pupils of all age groups and abilities engage well in learning. Key vocabulary is generally well promoted. Pupils in Key Stage 1, for example, were able to explain the meaning of the Resurrection in relation to the Easter story. Progression in understanding the significance and symbolism of Holy week and traditional Catholic prayers is good because of the carefully constructed curriculum. Pupils, at their own levels, know the pattern of the liturgical year, are familiar with the scriptures, and are clear as to what is expected of a Catholic community. Nevertheless, there are a few missed opportunities to strengthen the pupils' knowledge of patron saints.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education are good. Teachers display a strong commitment to teaching Catholic belief and religious literacy. As a result of these approaches and effective monitoring, teaching is good overall. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and subject knowledge is strong so explanations are well structured and confident. Within this positive picture, occasionally teachers' explanations are too long, which reduces the opportunity for pupils to explain their ideas, and as a result the rate of progress slows. Assessment for learning is developing, with some pockets of good practice. However, although most pupils knew their targets or could locate them they were less clear as to what they needed to do to reach the next level. Pupils with diverse learning needs are well supported.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good and meets the needs and aspirations of all learners. The liturgical year is well integrated into the life of the school and the religious education curriculum meets the Diocesan requirements of 10% of curriculum time. Schemes of Work for all Key Stages follow the 'Here I am' programme and provide a systematic course of study which have recently been revised to give more creative opportunities for pupils to reflect on contemporary moral and ethical issues. Pupils are taught to respect other faiths and cultures in order that they can live in a harmonious community where everybody matters. Visits to places of worship from other World faiths further deepen understanding and appreciation of global issues. Teachers make increasingly effective use of information communication technology (ICT) resources. However, the interactive nature of the whiteboards and the full utilisation of new technology in religious education classrooms have not yet been fully exploited.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

There is good leadership and management of religious education. The quality of provision in religious education is a high priority in the school. Staff care deeply about their pupils' spiritual development and are very supportive of the religious education team's vision for the curriculum. Self-critical, but creative, monitoring and evaluation of the subject area is at the heart of the school's good progress since the last inspection. Staff are well guided in their expectations of what the pupils can achieve. The religious education team has a strong sense of the Church's educational mission and shares this with all staff who display a genuine sense of spiritual purpose in their day-to-day work. In the well kept learning environment, the religious education team ensures that resources and staff are deployed very effectively so that all pupils are

included fully in the religious life of the school. However, whilst self-evaluation is embedded, a greater degree of rigour is needed to ensure that all new initiatives and developments are clearly focused on accelerating pupils' progress and are fully realised by establishing more formal systems for the sharing of good practice.

Grade 2