

# Archdiocese of Cardiff



## Inspection Report St. Helen's Catholic Infant and Nursery School

<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>7 – 9 October 2013.</b>
<b>Reporting Inspector</b>	<b>Mr Lyndon Watkins</b>
<b>Accompanying Inspector</b>	<b>Mrs Sheelagh McCool</b>
<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Infant and Nursery</b>
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	<b>3 – 7 years</b>
<b>Number on roll</b>	<b>FTE 156 pupils</b>
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Vale of Glamorgan</b>
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	<b>Mr John O'Beirne</b>
<b>School Address</b>	<b>Maes-y-Cwm Street Barry CF63 4EH</b>
<b>Tel. no.</b>	<b>01446 732834</b>
<b>E-mail address</b>	<b>StHelensIS@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk</b>
<b>Parishes served</b>	<b>St Helen's, Barry Our Lady and St. Illtyd's, Llantwit Major with St. Cadoc's, Cowbridge.</b>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	<b>26 -27 February 2008</b>
<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Mrs Barbara J Ellis</b>

## Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

<b>Proportion</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>With very few exceptions</b>	<b>Nearly all</b>
<b>90% or more</b>	<b>Most</b>
<b>70% or more</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>60% or more</b>	<b>A majority</b>
<b>Close to 50%</b>	<b>Half/around half</b>
<b>Below 40%</b>	<b>A minority</b>
<b>Below 20%</b>	<b>Few</b>
<b>Less than 10%</b>	<b>Very few</b>

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Archdiocesan website: [www.rcadc.org](http://www.rcadc.org)

## Context

St. Helen's is a long established Infant and Nursery school situated in the centre of the Vale of Glamorgan town of Barry. It has served the area for over 120 years and has operated within its current structure since 1974. It is the only remaining infant school in the Archdiocese of Cardiff.

Approximately 90% of the school's pupils live in the Barry town area and about 10% travel from the rural Vale. The number on roll has risen in recent years and there are now 136 infant and 42 part-time nursery pupils learning at the school. During the last five years there has been an influx of children from Eastern Europe and from Asia. As a result, 23% of pupils are identified as being from ethnic minority backgrounds and as having English as an additional language (EAL). Presently, 123 pupils are baptised Catholics (69%), 43 are of other Christian denominations (24%) and 11 (6%) are of no faith. Some 21% of pupils are identified as have special educational needs (SEN). This figure is above the Local Authority (LA) mean and the school has noted an increase in recent years in the number of pupils with behavioural difficulties and Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The school has seven full-time teachers (including the headteacher) and three part-time teachers, two of whom are non-Catholic. Five teachers hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) and one other is currently studying for the certificate. Ten Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) are employed, four of whom are Catholic.

The governing body of the school has been stable for some time. Movement of teaching staff has been fluid recently and a new curriculum leader for Religious Education was appointed to commence duties in September 2013.

The school has identified the following priorities for the improvement of Religious Education during the 2013-2014 academic year:

- The development of data analysis and target setting.
- The introduction of the new RE programme entitled 'Come and See'.
- The need for pupils to lead and evaluate collective worship.
- The provision of training for staff and governors
- The development of collaborative moderation work with colleagues across the Vale of Glamorgan.

## Summary

How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?

Adequate

The school is adequate in providing Catholic education because:

- standards of teaching are variable,
- assessment practices and MER processes are under-developed,
- data is not analysed effectively,
- standards of prayer and collective worship are good,
- community cohesion is good.

What are the school's prospects for improvement?

Adequate

The school's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- the school has not made sufficient progress in implementing the recommendations made in its last inspection,
- the quality of self-evaluation is adequate. It lacks an analytical approach due to the absence of relevant data,
- The school's new curriculum leader for RE has the potential to make a significant contribution to future development generally and specifically to drive forward the recommendations made in this report (see below). The school's new leadership team recognise the need to work together closely in partnership with governors in order to facilitate this aim.

## Recommendations and Required Actions

What does the school need to do to improve further?

The school needs to:

R1: raise standards of teaching by ensuring that lessons are have appropriate pace and are engaging and challenging for all pupils.

R2: establish a rigorous system for the monitoring, evaluating and reviewing of teaching and learning in a way that allows governors to hold leaders fully accountable for the standards attained.

R3: establish a rigorous system for tracking pupils' progress in RE in order to facilitate the identification of learning successes and setting of future targets following in-depth analysis of data.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the archdiocese.

## **Main Findings**

<b>KQ1. How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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Outcomes for pupils are adequate.

Pupils become increasingly religiously literate as they move through the school. The progress made by pupils between the Early Years and the end of the Foundation Phase is adequate. This is the case in particular for lower attaining pupils. A more adventurous approach to teaching would result in more rapid progress being made. At the time of the inspection, it was not possible to ascertain accurately how much progress is being made over time by groups of pupils, for example those who receive free school meals, those who have English as an Additional Language or those with Additional Learning Needs, as these pupils are not currently tracked. Some thinking skills and reflection on learning is evident, but this work is not embedded in the life of the school and consequently pupils are not sufficiently involved in improving their own understanding, skills and competence as learners. The majority of pupils engage with their learning appropriately but a minority lose their focus during lessons, usually at times when teaching lacks pace.

The quality of pupils' work overall at the end of the Foundation Phase is adequate. Insufficient attention is paid to the provision of challenging learning activities and pupils would benefit from a greater emphasis being placed on the development of reflective thinking and Assessment for Learning strategies. Information on the attainment of various groups of pupils was not available during the inspection. An analysis of standards, relating to the identified levels of attainment in 'Religious Education in Catholic Schools and Colleges' (2007) has not been completed. Therefore the percentage of pupils attaining level 2 in RE at the end of Year Two is not clear. However, standards of the samples scrutinised in the inspection are equivalent to those in English.

The manner in which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is good. They show a strong sense of belonging to the school community and those from different backgrounds play a full role in the school's life. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good and they respect one another. Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Staff exhibit a very caring and nurturing attitude towards all pupils. Some impressive outreach work has resulted in pupils being aware of those who are extremely poor; particularly the people of Sri Lanka who suffered due to the tsunami of 2004. Pupils' learning and fundraising has resulted in clean water, clothing and school buildings being provided for Sri Lankan children in great need.

The way in which pupils respond to and participate in collective worship is good. Two good acts of collective worship in class were observed during the inspection and a class led assembly was also of a good standard. Pupils delivered their message about 'Beginnings' appropriately. A large number of parents were in attendance, reflecting the high level of parental support that the school enjoys. At these times, pupils demonstrated good levels of reverence and respect. Consequently, pupils' spiritual and moral development benefits from the quality of the school's prayer and worship.

<b>KQ2. How good is provision?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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Provision overall is adequate.

The quality of teaching is variable; approximately half the lessons observed being good and half adequate.

In lessons judged to be adequate:

- Planning did not include sufficient promotion of purposeful learning for pupils.
- Learning activities were too conservative in nature, not offering sufficient challenge. They lacked ambition. This caused some pupils to lose interest in their learning.
- The pace of teaching and learning was not maintained at an appropriate level. Some lulls resulted in lost opportunities for effective learning to take place.

Most teachers exhibit secure subject knowledge. Standards would develop further if they used this knowledge in a more ambitious manner, being prepared to be more adventurous and creative in their approach and giving pupils more opportunities to develop independent learning skills. Most learning is teacher and LSA led and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to show curiosity, raise interesting questions or to lead their own learning, with appropriate guidance. The use of information technology (IT) in pupils' learning is developing. Tablet devices (recently purchased) are used in many lessons. However, there is limited evidence of the use IT being recorded in pupils' books. The school's LSAs carry out their tasks diligently. They would benefit from more opportunities to be able to take the initiative and refine learning activities if necessary. Their role has the potential to be further developed.

Assessment arrangements are adequate. Teachers record end-of-topic assessment results. However, these are not collated or analysed effectively. As a result, opportunities for leaders and governors to have a thorough understanding and grasp of pupils' rates of progress by class, year group or of a range of smaller groups are lost. Teachers' marking of learning is consistently positive. It does not, however, offer pupils a way forward. Assessment for and of learning is evident in some parts of the school but it is under-developed and therefore standards of marking are adequate. A transition policy is in place and the school's practices in this area are appropriate.

The manner in which the Religious Education curriculum and the wider life of the school meet pupils' needs is good. The school's programme of study, 'Here I Am', conforms to Bishops' Conference requirements and meets pupils' needs appropriately. It affords plentiful opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school fulfils its obligation to provide a daily act of collective worship for each pupil. The quality of prayer and worship is good. The range of prayer and worship opportunities is appropriate, both for individuals and for collective prayer. Those observed during the inspection were of good quality and properly reflected the Catholic nature of the school.

<b>KQ3. How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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The quality of leadership and management is adequate. The governing body fulfils its statutory and canonical responsibilities and it is stable in nature, particularly with regard to its foundation governors. The link governor for RE exhibits an in-depth knowledge of the life of the school. However, the rigour with which governors have put procedures in place for the monitoring, evaluating and reviewing (MER) of the Catholic life of the school and of the RE curriculum is under-developed. The governing body works with senior leaders in order to set priorities and an appropriate School Improvement Plan is produced as a result. Recommendations made following the school's previous inspection have not been fully addressed, namely: 'to ensure that all Religious Education lessons use a wide range of strategies to motivate and stimulate pupils, especially those who are more able' and 'to develop an assessed and levelled portfolio of *Here I Am* activities using the NBRIA levels of attainment'. Some work has been completed on a portfolio in February 2011. Its use is not embedded in the school's assessment and moderation procedures. These need to be an ongoing part of the life of the school and owned by all teachers. The portfolio would be enhanced if it were to include some transition moderation material and pupil profiles. The work of governors, in relation to holding leaders to account, is not sufficiently developed. Therefore the work of the governing body overall is adequate.

The headteacher, supported by other leaders and all staff, promotes the Catholic life of the school well. Staff show commitment to this cause. This judgement is corroborated by the views of parents, whose support for the school is almost uniformly positive. The Catholic ethos of the school is strong. However, there are short-comings in other areas of leadership and management.

The procedures that leaders have in put place to facilitate the MER of the Catholic life of the school and of the RE curriculum are adequate. Some observations of lessons take place but no planned structure is evident. Leaders do not produce an overview or synthesis of findings leading to the identification of future targets. Individual feedback is given to teachers, which is useful. However, this process is not robust or embedded and there is no analysis in place of year group cohorts or groups of pupils such as those with ALN or EAL. The manner in which this area is under-developed has the consequence that leaders and governors are not as informed as they might be about the quality of teaching and learning in the school and about progress that pupils make. This short-coming means that it is very difficult for leaders to ensure that targets set are the most fitting, appropriate and challenging ones possible, as some vital knowledge about standards is not routinely available. A new curriculum leader for RE has been in place for only a short time. She exhibits enthusiasm and commitment to her challenging role, which is in its infancy. She has the potential to make a significant impact on standards, given support and appropriate training. She will need to work closely with the link governor and with the headteacher, in order to maximise progress. Staff have attended relevant in-service training provided by the archdiocese and leaders have appropriate plans in place to

prepare staff for the implementation of the 'Come and See' programme during the forthcoming Advent season.

Leaders have established some good partnerships with the Archdiocese of Cardiff, schools within the establishment's cluster, the parish community and some Catholic schools further afield which have been visited to observe good practice.

Community cohesion is a strong feature of the school's life. Provision is inclusive and all pupils, including many from a range of ethnic backgrounds, exhibit pride in being a part of the school family. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that the school community is strong and cohesive in nature. The school fully recognises the primary role of parents in the education of their children. New parents are invited into school for an individual meeting of welcome and induction and, in general, parents feature prominently in the life of the school. The school's work in this area is good.

## Appendix 1

### Responses to parental questionnaires:

In total, 91 responses were received, of which 90 were very positive in nature. Common comments related to:

- the very positive and welcoming ethos of the school,
- the school's positive academic and pastoral reputation,
- the fact that many parents are former pupils of the school themselves. Therefore, a strong sense of pride in the heritage of Catholic education in the area was apparent.

## Appendix 2

### Evidence Base:

- Pre-inspection team consultation.
- Self-Evaluation documents.
- School Improvement Plan.
- School Information Form.
- Lesson observations in six classes.
- Observations of collective acts of worship.
- Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks.
- The school environment.
- Foci for prayer and reflection.
- Discussions with staff.
- Interviews with the headteacher, the curriculum leader, the link governor and the governing body.
- Meeting with parents.
- Meeting with a sample of pupils.
- Parental questionnaires.
- A range of portfolios provided.